

The Core Indicators for Public Health in Ontario



Standard health indicator definitions for local risk factor surveillance



Association of Public Health Epidemiologists in Ontario

History

Public health epidemiologists in Ontario (Canada) recognized the need for consistency among health reports. The Core Indicators for Public Health began in February 1998 as an initiative of the Association of Public Health Epidemiologists in Ontario (APHEO). The Core Indicators Working Group (CIWG) aims to systematically define and operationalize a core set of health indicators in Ontario.

The Working Group ensures that the Core Indicators for Public Health in Ontario are accurate, up-to-date and reflect the legislative requirements set in the Ontario Public Health Standards. They advocate for local health unit access to good quality data in a timely manner and promote the use of the Core Indicators.

The CIWG consists of representatives from a variety of stakeholder groups at the local, provincial and national levels.

In fall 2001, a Core Indicators website was launched as part of APHEO's website (www.apheo.ca). The indicators were completed in 2005. In 2006 and 2007, five sub-groups were formed to revise the indicators: Cancer, Smoking and Sun Safety; Healthy Eating and Active Living; Leading Causes; Reproductive Health; and Infectious Diseases. In 2009, three more sub-groups were added: Built Environment; Injury and Substance Misuse; and Social Determinants of Health.

What is a Core Indicator?

Health indicators, or core indicators, are measures of the health of populations and their communities. They reflect complex concepts in a concrete, clearly defined way using standardized definitions and methods. The Core Indicators form the foundation for community health status reporting in public health in Ontario.

The following key information is provided for each indicator:

- Description
- Specific Indicators
- Corresponding Outcome from the Ontario Public Health Standards
- Corresponding Health Indicator from Statistics Canada and the Canadian Institute for Health Information
- Data Sources
- Survey Questions or ICD Codes (where applicable)
- Alternative Data Sources
- Analysis Check List
- Method of Calculation
- Basic Categories
- Indicator Comments
- Cross-References to Other Sections
- References – Cited References and Other References
- Changes Made

Indicator Selection

The criteria for selecting Core Indicators are based on the following requirements:

- Applicable to outcomes and requirements from the Ontario Public Health Standards, including the Population Health Assessment and Surveillance Protocol
- Useful
- Meaningful
- Relevant to health status
- Applicable data available to all or most local public health units
- Core indicator important to public health
- Decisions by consensus

APHEO's Mission

To advance and promote the discipline and professional practice of epidemiology in Ontario public health units.

APHEO's Vision

The excellent leadership and professional expertise of APHEO advances public health in Ontario.

APHEO's Values

As a professional organization APHEO believes in:

- improving the health of the population;
- a public health system in which Epidemiologists are integral;
- supporting a participatory network of people with an interest in public health epidemiology;
- high standards for the practice of public health epidemiology;
- demonstrating leadership; and
- innovation.



Resources

The resources of the Core Indicators Working Group can be found on the APHEO website (www.apheo.ca).

The website contains definitions (but not data) for more than 120 public health indicators to enhance accurate and standardized reporting of information across local public health units in Ontario.

The Core Indicators cover topic areas that include:

- Chronic Disease Prevention
- Prevention of Injury and Substance Misuse
- Reproductive Health
- Child Health
- Infectious Diseases Prevention and Control
- Environmental Health
- Socio-Demographics

Additional resources available on the Core Indicators website include:

- References
- Detailed descriptions of available public health data sources for local risk factor surveillance in Ontario
- Associated documentation
- Analysis methods and recommendations from the Working Group
- Syntax files for indicator derivation

What is APHEO?

The Association of Public Health Epidemiologists in Ontario is an organization of approximately 90 full members who practice epidemiology in Ontario's public health units, as well as more than 150 affiliate members.

External Partnerships, Collaborators and Sponsors

- Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
- Ontario Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport
- Statistics Canada
- Public Health Agency of Canada
- Cancer Care Ontario
- Ontario Tobacco Research Unit
- Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences (ICES)
- University of Toronto
- Public Health Ontario

Plus numerous other groups that are consulted as indicators are written and revised.