



healthy living

fact sheet

Community Capacity Building

- Community capacity is the set of knowledge, skills, participation, leadership and other resources needed by a community to effectively address local issues and concerns.¹
- Capacity building for the purposes of improving health is about “enhancing the ability of an individual, organization or a community to address their health issues and concerns.”²
- Interventions which take into account and build upon existing community capacity are more likely to be successful in accomplishing desired change than those which are adopted in a more traditional top down manner.³
- Over the past decade, the importance of capacity building within the health sector and the field of health promotion has received increasing emphasis internationally.⁴
- In the past two decades, the effects of such factors as income, unemployment, poverty, and social networks have become paramount considerations in understanding how the social and economic structures of society affect health.⁶
- The higher the level of social capital, the more health benefits exist for members of the community.⁷
- Communities that have engaged citizens with assets in skills and knowledge have stronger capacity, and as a result, tend to be healthier communities.⁸
- The positive effects of social support vie with the effects of known health risks such as smoking, obesity, hypertension and physical activity.⁹
- There is a positive correlation between social capital and health status using indicators such as the mortality rate and self-rated health status.¹⁰
- Capacity building fosters action whereby community members determine their needs and strengths.¹¹
- 45% of British Columbians volunteered their time to a charitable and/or nonprofit organization.¹²
- The top three reasons for volunteering were: to make a contribution to the community, to use one’s skills and experiences, and being affected by the cause supported by the organization.¹³

¹ NSW Health Dept, 2001

² Ontario Prevention Clearinghouse, 2002

³ Neale et al. 2001, Minkler et al. 2001, Goodman et al. 1998

⁴ Hawe et al., 1997, Crisp et al., 2001, Ebbesen et al, 2004

⁶ van Kemenade, 2002

⁷ Cooper, 1999

⁸ Neale et al. 2001

⁹ Putnam, 2000

¹⁰ Kawachi: 1997, 1999

¹¹ Neale et al., 2001

¹²⁻¹³ Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2004