WORKSHEET

Understand and Identify Root Causes of Inequities

This worksheet is a companion to the Understand and Identify Root Causes of Inequities Action Learning Guide. Consider the worksheet a place to track your progress through the guide and to reflect on your own community's experience with the topic.

The worksheet will take you through the sections of the Action Learning Guide:

Uncovering Root Causes → **Why is it Important to Identify Root Causes?** → **Ask "Why" to Uncover Root Causes**
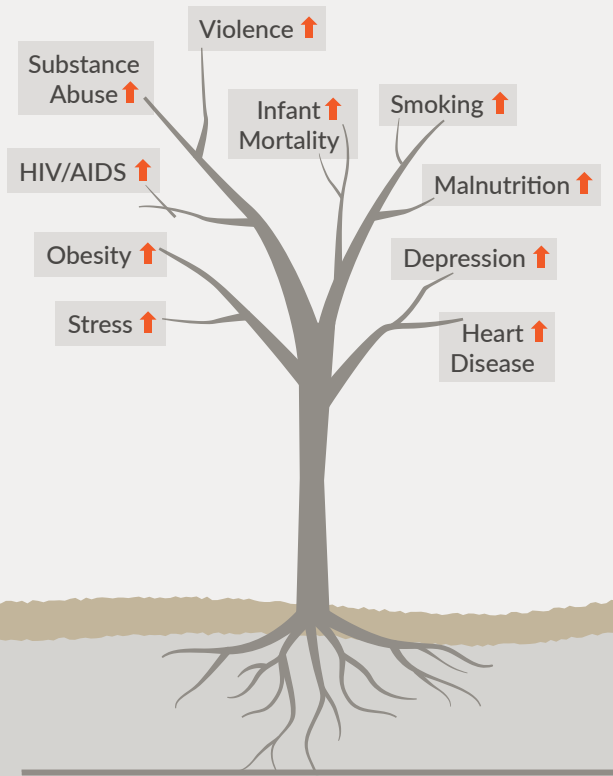
Uncovering Root Causes

Root Causes are the underlying reasons that create the differences seen in health outcomes. They are the conditions in a community that determine whether people have access to the opportunities and resources they need to thrive.

Consider this image.

Community conditions can support — or create barriers to — good health.

Violence ⬇

Substance Abuse ⬇

Smoking ⬇

HIV/AIDS ⬇

Infant Mortality ⬇

Malnutrition ⬇

Obesity ⬇

Depression ⬇

Stress ⬇

Heart Disease ⬇

Quality Schools, Access to Healthy Foods, Access to Healthcare, Access to Recreational Facilities, Clean Environment, Transportation Resources, Adequate Income, Health Insurance, Quality Housing, Jobs

Violence ⬆

Substance Abuse ⬆

Infant Mortality ⬆

Smoking ⬆

HIV/AIDS ⬆

Malnutrition ⬆

Obesity ⬆

Depression ⬆

Stress ⬆

Heart Disease ⬆

Adverse Living Conditions, Food insecurity, No Recreational Spaces, Limited Access to Quality Care, Segregation, Poverty, Poor Quality Schools, Occupational Hazards, Environmental Toxins, Marketing for Tobacco and Alcohol, Unemployment

Digging Deeper into Root Causes

Discrimination is a root cause of poor health outcomes because it can lead to unfair treatment and unequal access to services. Discrimination is not always conscious, intentional, or personal, and yet it has become part of institutional policies and practices overtime.

Discrimination may be related to things like:
- class
- race
- ethnicity
- immigration status
- gender
- sexual orientation

Discussion & Reflection

What types of discrimination do you see in your community?	Are groups separated or treated differently because of their income? Race? Gender?

Questions for Reflection & Discussion

It is sometimes easier to uncover root causes of inequities by working backward from the differences in our communities that are easy to spot. Think about your own community:

Are there neighborhoods in your community that have more access to opportunities than others?

What conditions make a neighborhood in your community desirable to live in? What makes a neighborhood undesirable?

What policies or practices might be contributing to those conditions?

Why is it Important to Identify Root Causes?

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

As you think about your journey toward improving health in your community it is important to consider the risks or unintended consequences of not addressing root causes of inequities. Recall the image of the tree in Section 2.0—even if you can't see them, unhealthy roots are still there, affecting the growth of the branches and leaves.

What would your community look like if everyone had access to the opportunities they needed to be healthy? Describe it in words or with pictures.

What might happen if underlying causes of inequities are not addressed in your community?

How could you create the conditions that address the underlying causes in inequities to ensure healthy roots?

Ask "Why" to Uncover Root Causes

The "But Why" Activity

Think of a health issue in your community (e.g., obesity, drug abuse, infant death) and write it down. Start asking what caused it. Each time an answer is given, continue asking "But why?" or "How could that have been prevented?" in order to identify some of the sources or root causes.

Tips:
- Practice this technique with familiar or less complex problems, then progress to more complex issues.
- This activity is most useful when people who are affected by the problem and who should contribute to the solution participate.

Existing Health Issue in Our Community
(e.g., Too many/Too few people are ...) _____

But why?	
But why?	
Could that have been prevented?	
How?	
But why?	
But why?	

A Collaborative View of Root Causes

When would the "But, Why?" technique be useful?	**Brainstorm who you want to engage in using the tool.**

Questions for Reflection & Discussion

Now that you know what root causes of inequities are, why it is important to address them, and ways to identify root causes in your community:

What did you learn that was especially useful?

What does this mean for your community?

What is one thing you will start doing differently?