Mental Health Promotion Knowledge Competencies

By the MHP Competency Subgroup of the IUHPE Global Working Group on Mental Health Promotion

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The International Union for Health Promotion and Education (IUHPE) is a global professional non-governmental organisation dedicated to health promotion around the world for 70 years. The IUHPE operates a unique worldwide, independent, global, professional network of people and institutions committed to improving the health and well-being of the people through the integration of health in all policies, advocacy for effective health promotion, translation of research and workforce development.

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Introduction

Promotion of mental health and well-being has been recognised as one of the Sustainable Development Goals, establishing a global commitment to ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all people across the life course.[1] The effects of global challenges such as climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, and large-scale crises, such as civil protests, riots and revolutions on mental ill-health have further reinforced the urgency of efforts to address mental health at the population and global levels.[2] [3] [4] [5] [6]

In 2020 the International Union of Health Promotion Education (IUHPE) established a Global Working Group on Mental Health Promotion (GWG MHP).[7] The mission of the GWG MHP is:

> *"To advance mental health promotion policy, practice and research, and support evidence-based action and training that will contribute to population health and well-being and reduce health inequities within and between countries globally."*

In March 2021, the IUHPE published a Position Statement from the GWG MHP indicating that mental health promotion must be a top investment priority in addressing the current mental health crisis and must be at the forefront of the global pandemic response and recovery plans.[8] The Position Statement supports a call to action for MHP implementation, including:

(i) enhancing investment in a comprehensive population approach to mental health;

(ii) investing in building the workforce and organizational capacity to implement mental health promotion;

(iii) growing and disseminating the evidence base for informing effective actions across diverse socio-cultural and economic settings.

Purpose

This document, Mental Health Promotion Knowledge Competencies, was developed to identify the knowledge necessary to enable mental health promotion teams to effectively implement mental health promotion programmes.

Rationale

To build workforce and organizational capacity to implement mental health promotion, there is a need for articulation of the unique knowledge base that underpins mental health promotion. Without this articulation, it will not be possible to build effective education, training and mental health promotion practice. However, at present, there is no shared global articulation of what knowledge competencies are unique to mental health promotion practice.

The Mental Health Promotion Knowledge Competencies document seeks to fill this gap by identifying the knowledge base that will best enhance the development of mental health promotion practice. It builds on the comprehensive set of competencies for health promotion developed by the International Union for Health Promotion Education, CompHP (Figure 1).[9] These competencies articulate the strong ethical basis for health promotion, and identify a wide range of skills, attributes and expertise in programme management that are also necessary for effective Mental Health Promotion.

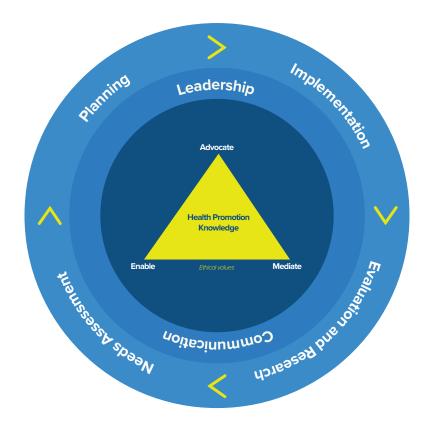## Health Promotion Competencies, reprinted from CompHP

Figure 1 The CompHP Core Competencies Framework for Health Promotion

Development of the Mental Health Promotion Knowledge Competencies

The development of the MHP Knowledge competencies was undertaken through the following process.

1. Review of documents articulating MHP Knowledge competencies identified through extensive work in Canada,[10] England[11] and Finland.[12]

2. Consultation with the Competencies and Training Subgroup of the GWG on Mental Health Promotion, including review of the CompHP Knowledge Competencies

3. Consultation with the wider Global Working Group on Mental Health Promotion.

The MHP Knowledge Competencies are presented as a resource for building shared global understanding of mental health promotion in ways that support implementation.

Mental Health Promotion – Knowledge Competencies

Concepts and Principles	• The concept of positive mental health and its relationship to population health, well-being and sustainable development.[13 14 15] • The concepts, principles and ethical values of mental health promotion, including supporting empowerment, participation, partnership, co-production and equity.[16 17] • The concepts of mental health equity, social justice and mental health as a human right, as outlined in the United Nations human rights framework.[18 19 20]
Determinants of Mental Health	• The determinants of mental health and their implications for action on mental health promotion and overall health and well-being.[21 22] • Mental health as a determinant of physical health and social and economic well-being.[23 24]
Awareness and Respect for social and cultural diversity	• The importance and impact of social and cultural diversity and identity on mental health and mental health inequities and the implications for mental health promotion action.[25] • Acknowledging and respecting different cultural understandings and indigenous concepts of mental health and their implications for mental health promotion action.[26]
Knowledge of Theories and Models	• The current theories and evidence which underpin effective leadership, advocacy and partnership building and their implications for mental health promotion action.[27 28 29] • The current models and approaches of effective programme management (including needs assessment, planning, implementation and evaluation) and their application to mental health promotion action.[30 31] • Knowledge of lifecourse and socio-ecological systems perspectives.[32 33]
Knowledge of Research Methods	• Research methods including the participatory qualitative and quantitative methods required to inform and evaluate mental health promotion action. Methods could include mental health and well-being impact assessments, economic analysis of cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness.[34 35 36 37] • The data, measures and indicators of mental health and well-being at a population level.[38]

Knowledge of systems and policies	• The systems, policies and legislation at multiple levels (local, regional, national and international) that impact on mental health and their relevance for mental health promotion.[39] • The concept of Mental Health in All Policies and its implications for policy development.[40 41]
Effective communication knowledge	• The communication theories and processes and use of relevant technologies required for effective mental health promotion action.

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