

THCU Products and Services

**Training, consultation and resources for health promotion
practitioners in Ontario. Free of charge.**

<http://www.thcu.ca>

**Information and Services on Health Communication,
Program Planning, Evaluation, Policy Change and Sustainability.**

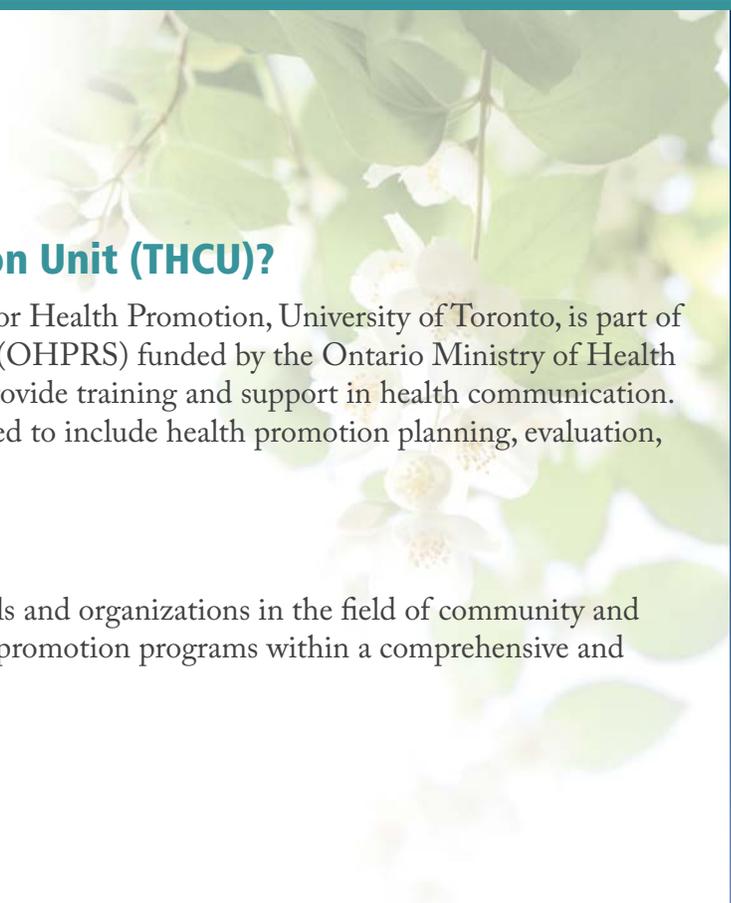


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About Us



What is The Health Communication Unit (THCU)?

The Health Communication Unit at the Centre for Health Promotion, University of Toronto, is part of the Ontario Health Promotion Resource System (OHPRS) funded by the Ontario Ministry of Health Promotion. Begun in 1993, it was developed to provide training and support in health communication. Between 1997 and 2000, its mandate was expanded to include health promotion planning, evaluation, policy change, and sustainability.

What is THCU's goal?

THCU aims to increase the capacity of individuals and organizations in the field of community and public health to plan, deliver, and evaluate health promotion programs within a comprehensive and population-based approach.

What services are available?

THCU provides

- ◆ quality resource materials,
- ◆ provincial and regional workshops and webinars, and
- ◆ tailored consultations.

What products and services do you offer in French?

Some of THCU's resources are available in French. These can be found on our website at www.thcu.ca. Each year, we have a budget to provide some consultations and training in French. Although we cannot currently offer all of our products and services in French, we are exploring ways to increase our capacity to serve the Francophone community. While we explore these options, we hope that bilingual health promotion practitioners in Ontario will make use of our resources and services, then promote, use and/or adapt them in their Francophone communities.

Examples of Resources

Our resources are all available, free of charge, online at www.thcu.ca

◆ At a Glance-The Eight Steps to Developing a Health Promotion Policy

This two-page handout summarizes THCU's eight-step process. Related worksheets and tools to help you complete each step are noted, along with tips for efficient, effective completion of each step. This is a great overview and checklist for both newbies and seasoned practitioners.

◆ Changing Behaviours: A Practical Framework

This resource describes and provides examples for the eight conditions required to change personal health behaviours.

◆ Health Communication Message Review Criteria

This review tool lists the minimum criteria for developing a persuasive message.

◆ Health Promotion 101

Health Promotion 101 is an on-line, self-directed course designed by the Ontario Health Promotion Resource System for health promotion practitioners as well as those interested in learning more about the field of health promotion. Nine modules address the key aspects of health promotion theory and practice, including definitions and concepts, models of health, theories of behaviour, organization and community change, and health promotion values and strategies. Students will become familiar with essential health promotion concepts, and, in so doing, increase their capacity to promote healthy changes in individuals, organizations, and communities.

◆ Literature Search Results in Support of Consultations

When needed, we contract a wonderful librarian named Barbara Scott to do literature searches on various topics that our clients ask us about. The requests from the last couple of years are posted on our website.

◆ Logic Models Workbook

This workbook equips participants with the knowledge and skills needed to develop logic models for their health promotion programs.

◆ Making the Case at a Glance

This two-page handout summarizes key information from THCU's two-day workshop, Making the Case. Revised in the fall of 2006, the new model is organized around a small number of key practical decisions such as "who" will make the case, rather than a series of steps to follow.



◆ Overview of Developing Health Communication Campaigns Tool Kit

This tool kit accompanies THCU's Overview of Developing Health Communication Campaigns workshop, gathering the slideshow, and handouts in one convenient location for use during the event.

◆ Overview of Health Communication Campaigns Workbook

This workbook explains our 12 steps and provides worksheets to aid you in applying the steps.

◆ Online Interactive Campaign Planner

This online application will guide you through steps 5 to 7 and will allow you to create, save, and print a full text and/or attractive visual summary of your campaign, which can then be shared and modified at any time, from any computer!

◆ Planning Case Studies

Implementing THCU's Six Step Health Promotion Planning Model is a series of case studies where the planning of actual health promotion programs is described using our six-step process.

◆ Strengthening Personal Presentations Workbook

This workbook focuses on five core skills for making an effective presentation--one that provides the audience with the information they seek in a stimulating manner.

◆ The Update: Special issue on risk communication

This issue of THCU's newsletter provides an overview of risk communication along with information on planning risk communication efforts, developing messages, and evaluating. It also contains articles from Ontario experts, describing their lessons-learned from local experiences.

Got great programs, services, resources, research? Don't forget to write your OHPE bulletin article! This successful partnership between The Health Communication Unit and Health Nexus is read by about 20,000. Publishing a feature article in the bulletin is a great way to disseminate information about your work directly to the health promotion community. Email features@ohpe.ca with your article idea or visit www.ohpe.ca for further details.

Regional Workshop Service

What are regional workshops?

Each year, THCU holds approximately 40 workshops across Ontario. We just need to know who would like to host one. It's first come, first served, and we work with groups as small as 30 and as large as 50.

We encourage hosts to promote outside their organization to community partners and others in their region.

We offer short webinars, half-day, one-day and two-day workshops on the following topics

- ◆ Audience analysis
- ◆ Conducting focus groups
- ◆ Conducting surveys
- ◆ Developing health communication campaigns
- ◆ How to's in health communication production
- ◆ Interactive health communication
- ◆ Introduction to evaluating health promotion programs
- ◆ Introduction to policy change
- ◆ Making the case
- ◆ Managing the communication campaign development process
- ◆ Media advocacy
- ◆ Media relations
- ◆ Message development
- ◆ Program planning
- ◆ Strengthening personal presentations
- ◆ Sustainability
- ◆ Using large group data sets



Who can be involved?

Any coalition or agency can be a partner in a regional workshop. That means acting as hosts and promoters of the event, as well as identifying and arranging local input and content.

Travel and material costs are negotiated on an individual basis. We provide the facilitators at no cost.

How do we get started?

If you are interested in being a partner for a regional event, please fill out the Service Request form online at www.thcu.ca.

Please note that we cannot guarantee service with less than three month's notice.

Consultation Service



THCU provides free consultations, for people in Ontario who are working in the area of health promotion, on the following topics:

- ◆ evaluation of health promotion programs,
- ◆ health communication,
- ◆ health promotion program planning,
- ◆ policy development, and
- ◆ sustainability.

Consultations may involve

- ◆ brief, one-time advice;
- ◆ feedback on your work (reviewing the quality and potential for effectiveness);
- ◆ hands-on assistance for groups working through our defined step models; and/or
- ◆ information and resources.

Will a consultation meet my needs?

Consultations can be carried out in English or French by THCU associates or guest consultants from our network of planners, advocates, communicators, and evaluators. They may be conducted via telephone, electronic media, in person at a mutually agreed upon location, or using a combination of all three methods.

They range from short one-time contacts to a number of longer sessions (half-day or more); time and travel limitations may exist.

How do I arrange a consultation?

To arrange a consultation, just complete and submit a Service Request form, available online at www.thcu.ca. Please note that we cannot guarantee service with less than six week's notice. It may take longer to arrange a consultation in French.

Examples of Consultations

Guided Process on Annual Program Plan

Challenge

Help an interdisciplinary Chronic Disease Prevention team with their annual program planning process.

Service received

Three face-to-face planning meetings with entire team – a tailored application of THCU’s program planning step model.

THCU resources/tools provided and/or discussed

- ◆ THCU’s Program Planning Workbook
- ◆ Evidence-based filters for suggested activities or projects
- ◆ Joint guidelines for assigning tasks
- ◆ Joint budget guidelines
- ◆ Stakeholder wheel

Actions taken as a result of the consultation

More joint team projects, instead of those undertaken by individual team members, or topic area projects, with an overall team focus on obesity prevention and workplace health.

Lessons learned

Although THCU’s tools and processes are useful on their own, tough questions about justifying the rationale for various programs are sometimes received better when coming from an external source, such as a THCU consultant, compared to colleagues and managers.

Barriers to taking advice or using the tools

There were different types of practitioners working together, e.g., nutritionist, public health nurses, health promoters, etc. Working with such a diverse group was sometimes a challenge. The team was also initially concerned that an outside facilitator would bring in his/her own “agenda”; however, this did not happen.



Guided Process on Evaluation Plan for Health Communication Campaign

Challenge

Help Parent Action on Drugs (PAD) develop an evaluation plan for a communication campaign on youth marijuana prevention – targeted to youth in Ontario. The primary audience was “secondary school students in Ontario between ages of 15 and 18 (or Grades 10, 11, 12) who are using marijuana regularly, and who may be using it ‘problematically.’” The secondary audience was students in the same grades who are not currently using or who are using marijuana experimentally. The campaign, involving events, teacher training, peer education and other components, was already underway.

Service received

Clients had one two-hour face-to-face session with a THCU consultant and project team, which focused on determining the best way to use available evaluation resources: formative, process or outcome evaluation.

THCU resources/tools provided and/or discussed

Several of the worksheets from the Introduction to Evaluating Health Promotion Programs workbook.

Actions taken as a result of the consultation

PAD decided to use their resources toward a process evaluation, which would inform changes to be made to the second year of the campaign. They developed a request for proposal to further develop and carry out the process evaluation.

Lessons learned

PAD learned to prioritize and narrow the scope of their evaluation. PAD also gained enough information to feel that, given another similar project, they could proceed on their own. If exploring new territory, however, PAD might ask for another consultation.

Barriers to taking advice or using the tools

PAD encountered some challenges applying the evaluation model and tools the THCU consultant recommended. They would have liked more “hand-holding”.



Feedback on Evaluation Work Plan

Challenge

Provide feedback on the Physical Activity Resource Centre's (PARC) Walk This Way evaluation plan and give them other approaches and options to consider.

Service received

THCU provided feedback and suggestions on PARC's evaluation plan via email and telephone.

Actions taken as a result of the consultation

PARC incorporated as much feedback as possible into the evaluation plan for that year. They "tabled" the rest of the information for future planning.

Lessons learned

The consultation process and turn-around took longer than PARC expected. In the future, PARC will request a consultation further in advance.

Information about Focus Groups

Challenge

Provide information about focus groups to Ontario Women's Health Network (OWHN). Specifically, OWHN wanted information about using focus groups not only as a method to gather information, but as a capacity-building tool.

Service received

THCU performed a literature search and sent OWHN a compilation of the information found.

Actions taken as a result of the consultation

OWHN used the information from the literature search as background information to help "build their case" for using focus groups. In the end OWHN felt that they were better informed.

Lessons learned

OWHN found THCU's service timely, thorough, and valuable. OWHN also felt that THCU has access to information that would be difficult for OWHN to attain on their own.

Barriers to taking advice or using the tools

Multiple competing demands on OWHN's available resources.



Feedback on Website

Challenge

Review and provide input for the ‘Go Outside the Box’ campaign website, intended for community partners, their staff and the population at large.

Service received

Advice on website changes to consider, sent by THCU consultant, via email and telephone.

THCU resources/tools provided and/or discussed

A member of the ‘Go Outside the Box’ community partnership had previously attended THCU’s Planning Effective Health Campaigns workshop and used the tools handed out in that session.

Actions taken as a result of the consultation

The ‘Go Outside the Box’ community partnership member made changes to the website. For example, the campaign description was expanded and the site was linked with other partnership websites.

Lessons learned

Time is at a premium. Having a consultation is valuable and easier than the ‘Go Outside the Box’ committee member thought it would be. Information was shared with the partnership members.

Barriers to taking advice or using the tools

The ‘Go Outside the Box’ committee’s first choice would have been to have a face-to-face meeting. Due to time constraints, this was not possible; however, they were still able to incorporate the suggested changes.

We do not implement processes, analyze data, or create resources or reports for our clients. However, we offer training on our evaluation, planning, policy, health communication, and sustainability models. We also conduct “guided process” consultations where we help clients apply our models to a particular situation and we are able to comment on drafts and processes. Sometimes clients do not realize that we are able to connect with them multiple times about a particular project to ensure implementation questions are answered.

Other Key Facts



The Health Communication Unit (THCU) is mandated to provide support to health promotion practitioners and organizations in the areas of health communication, planning, evaluation, policy development, and sustainability.

Funded since November 1992 at \$415,000 per annum, we are part of the Ontario Health Promotion Resource System (OHPRS) – over 20 organizations funded by the Ontario Government (largely the Ministry of Health Promotion) at a total cost of approximately \$5 million (www.ohprs.ca). THCU is widely recognized as a system leader. Our system roles include currently chairing the Coordinating Committee and holding leadership positions on most other major committees.

Each year, we deliver approximately 40 workshops, hold approximately 75 face-to-face guided-process consultations, and provide advice and information about 100 times per year, reaching over 3,300 clients.

We maintain a website at www.thcu.ca, with over 100,000 visits per year and co-publish the weekly Ontario Health Promotion Email Bulletin and its searchable archive at www.ohpe.ca.

We have 13 workbooks in print and dozens of other tools and handouts in circulation, most available on our website and some available in French.

THCU is a leading user of new technologies in its sector: registrations, service requests, and needs assessments are collected online. Our internal database allows for quick entry and production of reports for clients and funders. We are using quick web publishing tools for community building (www.thcu.ca/Workplace/vc/index.cfm) and have an interactive, online health communication workbook (www.thcu.ca/infoandresources.htm).

THCU is dedicated to Continuous Quality Improvement. We regularly conduct time of service and follow-up evaluations, which are shared with participants and stakeholders and drive continual improvements in how we develop, promote, administer, deliver, and evaluate our services. All evaluations – system-wide and THCU's own – reveal high satisfaction with services and materials.

THCU is part of the Centre for Health Promotion at the University of Toronto. We have a full-time Service Coordinator/Office Administrator and a core group of part-time consultants supplemented by guest consultants as needs and opportunities arise. THCU also conducts other projects, such as our Tobacco Youth Vortal Project) and our comprehensive workplace health promotion project (www.thcu.ca/Workplace)

A number of our consultants teach highly regarded university courses in health promotion and coordination. We have excellent collegial relationships with health communication scholars across the world.