

Social Policy and Health Statement

The New Zealand Nurses Organisation actively supports the view that health and self determination are basic human rights of individuals. Inequalities and disparities in health are found world wide, based on ethnicity, age, gender, socio-economic position and religion.

Achievement of health potential will be impacted by access to the determinants of health such as, environmental, social and cultural factors, housing, employment, education and transport. Inequalities and disparities arising from the determinants of health can be measurably alleviated through government policy designed to achieve this end. Te Tiriti o Waitangi underpins the foundations of New Zealand society embracing the principles of partnership, protection and participation that are integral to this social policy statement and in securing a fair and just society.

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to engage members in understanding social policy and how it impacts on practice, professional assessment and decision making.

Definition

Social policy is the development and implementation of strategies to bring about change that will have beneficial and measurable impact on the welfare of our society. "Therefore, the formulation of appropriate social policy can assist the realization of the right to health" (UN Committee, 2000).

Rationale

Fundamental to the formulation of social policy is the capacity for individuals and communities to participate in decision making regarding all aspects of health care. Individuals and communities have a right to appropriate information in order to make informed health choices; engage in debate; contribute to decisions about factors which affect health, health care policy, care provision and services.

The formulation of social policy in relation to health should be founded in the spirit of justice and equity, guided by the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the Alma Ata Declaration on Primary Health Care and the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion and directed towards:

- Building healthy public policy;
- Creating environments supportive of good health;
- Strengthening community participation in decision making;
- Re-orienting health services towards a primary health care focus of prevention; and
- Health maintenance.

These principles have been affirmed in the Bangkok Charter(2005).

NZNO Position

NZNO supports the principles outlined by the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (2000). These are:

- Availability. Functioning public health and healthcare facilities, goods and services, as well as programs, have to be available in sufficient quantity in order to meet health needs. This includes the basic requirements of safe drinking water, adequate sanitation, hospitals, clinics, essential medications and trained

health personnel receiving domestically competitive salaries and working conditions;

- Accessibility. Health care must be physically and economically affordable. It should be provided to all on a non-discriminatory basis. Information on how to obtain services must be freely available;
- Acceptability. All health facilities must be respectful of medical and nursing ethics, and they must be culturally appropriate; and
- Quality. Health facilities, goods, and services must be scientifically and medically appropriate and of good quality. To be adequate, this requires competent health personnel, scientifically approved and unexpired medications, safe hospital environment, water and adequate sanitation.

Without quality healthcare that is accessible, acceptable and available the objective of achieving equitable share of health resources for all will not be realised. Social policy should guide the efficient use of resources within an equitable framework to achieve the best affordable health outcomes.

Nursing & Social Policy

Because politics is the vehicle of policy making and social change, some nurse leaders will have to combine the gentle art of nursing with the rougher one of political activity” (WHO 1987:18).

Chick, author of NZNO’s 1993 Social Policy Statement comments that “Social policy should shape the role and function of nurses within society. Nurses have a social contract with society which is a medium through which social policy is enacted” (1999, 8-9). Accountability, transparency, mutual trust, self responsibility and meeting legislative requirements are all fundamental to the foundations of the social contract.

Frameworks guiding analysis of and decision-making about social policy are appended.

NZNO encourages and supports nurses to:

- Realise the principles of nursing standards and social policy and how they affect the interests of health and the well being in the community;
- Identify and bring issues to the notice of governments, health professionals and the community. Nurses may formulate recommendations and lobby to resolve situations by putting in submissions and contributing to policy development.
- Influence national health policy planning and evaluation processes through representation and advocacy principles of social justice.

References

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Chick N (1993). Social Policy Statement. Wellington: NZNO.

Kohn, L.T., Corrigan, J.M., & Donaldson (eds.) (1999). To err is human: building a safer health system. Washington: National Academy Press.

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2000). Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. General comments. No. 14. The right to the highest attainable standard of health (Article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights). E/C.12/2000/4. 11 August 2000.

World Health Organisation (1978) Declaration of Alma Ata: international conference on primary health care. Alma-Ata, USSR: World Health Organisation.

World Health Organisation (1986) Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion: proceedings of the second international conference on health promotion. Ottawa, Canada: World Health Organisation.

World Health Organisation (1987). Leadership for Health for All. Geneva: Division of Health Manpower Development, WHO.

World Health Organisation. (2005). The Bangkok Charter for Health Promotion in a Globalised World.

http://www.who.int/healthpromotion/conferences/6gchp/bangkok_charter/en/

Key Social Policy Documents

Government Strategy Documents

- > New Zealand Health Strategy (2000)
- > Primary Health Care Strategy (2001)
- > Rural Health Strategy (2002)
- > He Korowai Oranga Maori Health Strategy (2002)
- > Whakatataka Tuarua
- > Te Tahuu, Improving Mental health 2005 – 2015, *The Second Mental Health Addiction Plan*. Wellington

Legislation

Codes: Privacy Code, Health and Disability Code, Code of Rights
Professional association policies

Appendix One: A Guide to Assessing Social Policy

Social Policy that relates to health should be based on the following concepts and principles.

Quality of Care:

- > Inequalities in health as a focus for planning and action
- > Improving the health status of all from a population health approach to care.
- > Extending utilization of services
- > Outcome focused
- > Work force development
- > Reducing ethnic, age, gender, religious and socio-economic inequalities
- > National standards of care to be set
- > National database to be set, achieved and maintained for analysis and comparisons
- > Monitoring and evaluating at a local and regional level
- > Ongoing research and development

Utilisation:

- > Engagement with stakeholders and the community
- > Strengthen participation of the community in health planning and service implementation
- > Community governance where possible
- > More flexible community-based care to be made available
- > Services to meet individual needs as a basis for care

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- > Better integration of health and social care
- > Long-term and lifestyle diseases / conditions to be focused on
- > Intersectoral collaboration

Access:

- > More control for users over treatment
- > Developing consumer choice
- > Alternatives to general practitioner services in place – health line, Maori providers, Non government organisations (NGO) and primary health organisations (PHO)
- > New models of care that are largely nurse led – nurse led clinics.
- > National standards set for consistency of provision of care
- > Service improvement sciences applied

Whitehead, M. (2000).
The concepts and principles of equity and health.
 World Health Organisation

Appendix Two: Social Policy Assessment Tool

NZNO supports the integration of social policy principles and values outlined in the Social Policy document to guide the decision-making and assessment process.

The following questions will assist to guide the user to consider aspects of social policy when considering proposed changes.

What is the issue/s raised, or what (if any) concerns have you identified?

Have you considered the potential impacts your decision-making has in relation to?

- > Economic
- > Social
- > Human rights, ethnic or cultural
- > Te Tiriti O Waitangi
- > Professional and ethical
- > Environmental and global responsibility

What values / principles are challenged in relation to the issue(s) you have identified?

- > What does this look like? i.e. cultural risk etc
- > Is there a policy that supports your position - if so what is the policy trying to address?
- > Who will benefit most?
- > What might the unintended consequences be?
- > What potential adverse consequences can be identified?

Is there a policy goal that supports your concern(s)?

- > Research available information including policies and documents
- > Is there an assessment tool available?

Is there a policy that challenges your position?

- > This will help you to formulate an argument or abandon the issue
- > What might the recommendations be?

How may I present this issue/argument?

- > Submission
- > Lobbying
- > Advocacy
- > Activism

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Mission statement

NZNO is committed to the representation of members and the promotion of nursing and midwifery. NZNO embraces Te Tiriti o Waitangi and works to improve the health status of all peoples of Aotearoa/ New Zealand through participation in health and social policy development.

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