

## **What Is A Healthy Community?**

Most definitions of what constitutes a “healthy community” offer a broad perspective of the term. For instance, the Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition promotes healthy community principles across all sectors, providing support, facilitation, resources and tools to communities that pursue local healthy community goals.

### **Healthy communities are based on the following principles:**

- health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being. Social, environmental and economic factors are important inter-related determinants of human health
- people cannot achieve their fullest potential unless they are able to take control of those things which determine their well-being
- all sectors of the community are inter-related and share their knowledge, expertise and perspectives to work together to create a healthy community

### **A healthy community process involves:**

- wide community participation
- broad involvement of all sectors of the community
- local government commitment
- creation of healthy public policies

### **Qualities of a healthy community include:**

- clean and safe physical environment
- peace, equity and social justice
- adequate access to food, water, shelter, income, safety, work and recreation
- adequate access to health care services
- opportunities for learning and skill development
- strong, mutually supportive relationships and networks
- workplaces that are supportive of individual and family well-being
- wide participation of residents in decision-making
- strong local cultural and spiritual heritage
- diverse and vital economy
- protection of the natural environment
- responsible use of resources to ensure long term sustainability

As you can see from the above definition, a healthy community involves a variety of key indicators and any attempt at improving the outcomes for children and families should incorporate this rather broad definition of “health”.