

Democratizing Systems Thinking for Public Health Professionals – expanded abstract

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Systems thinking is critically important for effective public health practice. Public health practitioners, particularly those in the public sector, need tools that are accessible, clear, and easy to use to create an effective routine. Without these tools, we may revert back to historical practices and individual-focused approaches. Causal Loop Maps are one promising tool for systems thinking, though they largely find application in highly specialized fields outside of public health. Additionally, causal loop maps and their related benefits are often kept behind paywalls and in membership only spaces. When causal loop map creation is connected to public health or made otherwise accessible, the content falls short of establishing a comprehensive product for practical use. This tool, designed to make systems thinking a habit through the exploration of public health applications of causal loop maps, was created by, for, and in partnership with public health professionals. It includes background and foundational information on systems thinking and its importance in the field, basic information on causal loop maps, instructions for creating your own specific to your public health context, and provides tips and tricks for getting started and troubleshooting, and answers the ever-important question 'now what?'. There are example maps, a how-to video, and frequently asked questions to guide users through the process from idea conception through to engagement of post-mapping resources. Importantly, this tool includes a 'habit tracker' that encourages users to track their learning, new partners, new funding mechanisms, and new strategies identified from continued use of the tool. The tracker includes key questions and opportunities for reflection so that learners can examine how well they

are incorporating systems thinking into their public health practice. This web-based tool seeks to make systems thinking a habit for public health professionals through a clear, accessible, user-friendly, free tool. The tool allows users to engage at any point, and tailor its application to their needs and context. The author will walk through this tool as a means of introducing it and sharing widely.