

MAKING CONTACT:

A Training for COVID-19 Case Investigators and Contact Tracers

THE PUBLIC HEALTH APPROACH TO PROBLEM-SOLVING

Although public health problems can come in many forms, there is a standard approach for problem-solving in public health. Here are the steps:

1

Define the Problem



The first step is to spot the problem.

Public health professionals use a variety of different tools and data systems to help them identify and understand the problem. Important questions to ask are:

- What population is affected by the problem?
- Where is the problem?
- When is the problem happening?
- How big is the problem?

2

Find the Cause

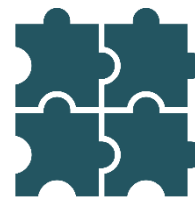


Once the problem is identified, public health professionals then investigate what *caused* this issue.

For example, there might be factors that make certain groups more likely to get a disease. These are known as “risk factors,” and can include individual behaviors, inherited characteristics, contact with something in the environment, and other characteristics that might be linked with a particular health condition.

3

Find Solutions that Work



The next step is to ask, “What can we do to solve the problem?”

Public health professionals examine what has worked in the past when addressing similar problems. If that solution makes sense in the current situation, it might be a good starting point. It’s also important to get input from the people impacted by the public health problem to make sure that the solutions being considered make sense for that community.

4

Take Action



Finally, public health professionals put solutions into action.

Public health professionals track progress to make sure that the solution is working and to understand if they should make improvements. Feedback from people impacted by the health problem and other health data can also help during this stage.

Adapted from the CDC web page [“Introduction to Public Health.”](#)