Health Impact Assessment as a Practical Approach to Decision Making

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The U.S. spent $2.3 trillion on health care in 2008
Influences on Health: Broadening the Focus

Health is shaped by many influences, including age, sex, genetic make-up, medical care, individual behaviors and other factors not shown in this diagram. Behaviors, as well as receipt of medical care, are shaped by living and working conditions, which in turn are shaped by economic and social opportunities and resources.

Prepared for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation by the Center on Social Disparities in Health at the University of California, San Francisco.

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“Get more exercise”...
Diet:

“Food deserts” ... ?
Diet:
Food deserts
“I never thought of this as a health issue”

- Car-friendly communities have almost double the rate of obesity as pedestrian-friendly communities.
- Places that require more driving have higher injury costs.
- Access to public parks and recreational facilities has been linked to reductions in crime and juvenile delinquency.
- Children who receive early childhood education have less disease and disability as adults, and live longer.
- Children with Attention Deficit Disorder do better in school when they play outside in green spaces.
- An E-Z Pass toll system reduced rates of premature birth.
How can we improve health in the U.S.?

Our nation’s health problems cannot be solved by the health sector alone:

*Health must be factored into major new initiatives in every sector.*
Health Impact Assessment

- A practical approach that translates public health principles and data into information that is useful for a decision maker.

- Focus on solutions: develops practical recommendations, informed by both public health priorities AND the economic, technical or political constraints on the decision.

- Helps forge effective collaborations between health experts and other agencies and officials.
The HIA Process

1. **Screening** – is the HIA likely to add value? Is it feasible?
2. **Scoping** – determine the important health effects, affected populations, available evidence, etc.
3. **Assessment** – analyze baseline conditions and likely health effects.
4. **Recommendations** – develop health-based recs and a feasible plan for implementing them.
5. **Reporting** – disseminate the report to the public, stakeholders, solicit input.
6. **Monitoring and Evaluation** -- monitor results of HIA, monitor health outcomes; evaluate results of HIA.
**HIA – a local example**

**Topic of HIA:** proposed housing development: 61 senior housing units near two major freeways and the Port of Oakland.

**Health Risks:**
1. *Indoor air quality* from outdoor pollution sources (*NOT* a part of the required permit process) could harm residents
2. *Noise:* related to sleep disturbance, high blood pressure
3. *Pedestrian Safety* – identified dangerous road crossings

*Source:* Human Impact Partners, 
[http://www.humanimpact.org/component/jdownloads](http://www.humanimpact.org/component/jdownloads)
Outcomes:

1. **Air Quality** – developer implemented air filtration; changed windows facing freeway.

2. **Noise** – developer added a noise-buffered courtyard and entranceway away from the highway.

3. **Safety** – recommendations for “traffic calming” measures (speed bumps, wider sidewalks with narrower lanes, safe cross walks) to allow residents walking access to nearby retail. Under consideration.

Source: [http://humanimpact.org/JLG_case_study_draft.pdf](http://humanimpact.org/JLG_case_study_draft.pdf)
Integrating HIA into the environmental impact statement process:

Decision:
Bureau of Land Management proposed expansion of oil leasing in Alaska’s North Slope, necessitating an EIS

- Local government became a “cooperating agency” – a role through which local governments can formally participate in an EIS
- The local health department drafted an HIA
- The BLM incorporated the HIA into the EIS
Oil and gas leasing on Alaska’s North Slope

Community testimony:
*People recognize the benefits:* Oil is the backbone of the local economy, and fund services, infrastructure

*Many voiced concerns as well:*
- Social change, drugs and alcohol;
- Could cancer and breathing problems relate to local pollution?
- Food supply: interference with hunting and fishing
No litigation!

Changes in the leasing plan that were widely accepted on both sides, in part related

New measures to address community health concerns: protect hunting and fishing, monitor for contaminants in local game, orient workers to the culture.

Strong, ongoing collaboration between the community and the agency, with several new projects currently
Massachusetts low income energy assistance program

Policy Question: energy prices spiked after Katrina, increasing the financial burden for families. Should LIHEAP funds be increased?

Health Effects:
- Pneumonia
- Burns
- CO poisoning
- Hunger and poor nutrition

Recommendations and Outcomes:
Increased funding for LIHEAP
New evaluation parameters to ensure adequate data on outcomes of program

implications for Medicaid expenditures
Many nations have well-established or developing practice:

- Canada
- Australia and New Zealand
- European Union
- Individual European nations
- Thailand
- Ghana
- Viet Nam
Health Impact Assessment
Development lending and international business

World Bank and IFC: part of evaluation standards for large development loans

Equator Principles

Multinational Corporations: eg Shell, Chevron, large mining companies

Why? Business case for HIA
• Lower business costs
• Corporate social responsibility
• Healthy workforce
• Risk management

“Companies should use health impact assessments with a simple goal in mind: to leave communities healthier than when they found them. A mine cannot be successful without a healthy local workforce and the support of the community in which it operates.”
ICMM, 2010
HIA Practice in the U.S.
Current numbers – self-reported HIAs

Completed HIAs: 79
HIAs in progress: 40

- No mandates outside environmental impact assessment
- Despite mandates, little consideration of health in EIA
- Several laws introduced at local, state, federal level—MA passed law requiring HIA of new roads

Please let us know about your HIA work!
http://www.healthimpactproject.org/hia_submit
Completed HIAs in the United States
1999–2010: 79

Map Courtesy of A. Dannenberg, A. Wendel, CDC NCEH
Completed and In Progress HIAs
1999–2010: 119

Map Courtesy of A. Dannenberg, A. Wendel, CDC NCEH
HIA in the U.S.
Sectors and topics

- Built Environment
- Transportation
- Natural Resources and Energy
- Housing
- Labor and Employment
- Agriculture and Food
- Education
- Climate Change
- Economic Policy
To promote and support the use of HIA as a tool to ensure that decisions in non-health sectors, whether at the local, state, tribal, or federal level, are made with health in mind.
## The Health Impact Project: Funded HIA Demonstration Grants

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>- Cap and trade regulations</td>
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<td>- Water conservation regulations</td>
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<td>- Light rail corridor planning</td>
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<td>Hawaii</td>
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<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>- Biomass power plant</td>
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<td>Kentucky</td>
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<td>Houston, Texas</td>
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<td>Atlanta, Georgia</td>
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<td>- Comprehensive plan/Transportation plan</td>
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<td>New Hampshire</td>
<td>- State budget process</td>
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<td>Chicago, IL</td>
<td>- Utility regulation</td>
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<td>Oregon</td>
<td>- Farm to school legislation</td>
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Opportunity:
How can HIA help attain our health objectives?

- Federal, state and local agencies planning new initiatives—funding, regulations, programs – should use HIA to identify unanticipated health opportunities and risks.

- The Sustainable Communities partnership (HUD, DOT, EPA) should consider ways to build health into funding initiatives, and offer grantees HIA training and TA.

- The National Prevention, Health Promotion, and Public Health Council should recommend HIA

- The National Academy of Sciences will release HIA guidance this spring: this should be a resource.
Questions?

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