HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENTS AS A TOOL TO ADVANCE HEALTH AND EQUITY

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Public health agencies alone cannot assure the nation’s health.

Institute of Medicine, 2002. The Future of the Public’s Health in the 21st Century
**Health Impact Assessment: Key Points**

- *Conducted to inform a specific decision*: usually decisions that would not otherwise focus on health: proposed legislation, a new land use plan, a new education policy, etc.

- *Broad analytic framework*: social, economic, environmental determinants

- *Collaboration with stakeholders*: strong engagement of community, business, decision-making body throughout.

- *Pragmatic*: focus on providing timely, useful judgments based on available knowledge and public health expertise, rather than elegant quantitative models

- *Focused on solutions*: feasible recommendations that can help minimize risks and maximize benefits.
# The Steps of HIA

The HIA process encourages public input at each step.

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<td>Determine whether an HIA is needed and likely to be useful.</td>
<td>In consultation with stakeholders, develop a plan for the HIA, including the identification of potential health risks and benefits.</td>
<td>Describe the baseline health of affected communities and assess the potential impacts of the decision.</td>
<td>Develop practical solutions that can be implemented within the political, economic or technical limitations of the project or policy being assessed.</td>
<td>Disseminate the findings to decision makers, affected communities and other stakeholders.</td>
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WHAT TOPICS HAVE HIAS COVERED

- Built Environment: 34%
- Transportation: 21%
- Natural Resources & Energy: 14%
- Agriculture & Food: 9%
- Housing: 7%
- Education: 5%
- Labor & Employment: 4%
- Other: 6%
**BACKGROUND ON HOUSING-RELATED HIAS**

US-based HIAs conducted in the last 11 years with focus on:

- Housing (15)
- Built environment with strong housing component (25)

**LOCATIONS:**
- CA (16)
- MN and OR (3 each)
- GA, MA, NC and OH (2 each)
- 9 other states
- 1 national HIA
How does housing affect health?

Housing Quality

Affordability

Social and Community Attributes

Physical Neighborhood Factors

How does housing affect health?
**Housing Quality – Example 1**

**Decision:** Whether to include carpeting in new San Francisco PHA developments

**Date:** 2002

**HIA Leader:** San Francisco DPH w/ Asthma Relief for Kids and American Lung Association

**Health Concern:** Carpeting can serve as reservoirs for dust mite allergen, a known asthma trigger
SF Board of Supervisors passed resolution:

- Reasonable proportion of new SFHA units will be carpet-free
- SFHA will increase staff and tenant awareness on the Reasonable Accommodation Policy for removing carpet in existing units
HOUSING QUALITY - EXAMPLE 2

DECISION: Whether to consolidate housing inspections (Ohio)

DATE: 2014

HIA LEADER: Ohio Housing Finance Authority w/ Ohio State College of Public Health

HEALTH CONCERN: Plans to reduce frequency of inspections may decrease observation and correction of health hazards
Outcomes

HIA Recommends:

• Standardize property inspection process and tools
• Enhance training for inspectors to increase consistency and quality
• Determine frequency of inspections based on age and size of properties
• Consider impact of reduced interaction between residents and landlords if inspection frequency reduced
Housing Affordability - Example

Decision: Whether to change Mass. Rental Voucher Program

Date: 2005

HIA Leaders: Child Health Impact Working Group

Health Concern: Proposals to 1) add extra requirements on vouchers and 2) increase # of mobile vouchers could affect housing insecurity/health
Housing Affordability Outcomes

HIA Conclusions:

- Work requirements, time limits and increased reenrollment frequency place voucher holders at risk
- Reducing caps on rent share for mobile vouchers likely to improve health
- Impact of more mobile vouchers inconclusive
  - Options for mobility unclear
  - Effect of mobility uncertain
INTERACTION w/NEIGHBORHOOD - EXAMPLE

DECISION: Planning/zoning decisions along a new light rail line – St Paul, MN

DATE: 2012

HIA LEADERS: PolicyLink, TakeAction Minnesota, ISAIAH

HEALTH CONCERN: Neighborhood redesign affects multiple health factors
HIA QUESTIONS

Will zoning changes affect:
Access to affordable transportation?
Safe and walkable communities
Small, locally and minority-owned businesses?
Access to quality jobs?
Housing displacement?
Cost of housing?
INTERACTION w/ NEIGHBORHOOD OUTCOMES

HIA found:

• Access to transportation and employment would expand
• More options for walking/biking but higher density could increase risks from other vehicles
• Main concern: Housing displacement
  • City council agreed to housing affordability workgroup
  • Feasibility studies of two HIA recommendations
SOCIAL INTERACTIONS - EXAMPLE

DECISION: How to redevelop the South Lincoln Homes neighborhood in Denver, CO

DATE: 2009

HIA LEADERS: EnviroHealth Consulting and Mithun

HEALTH CONCERN: Neighborhood redesign affects multiple health factors
**Social Interaction Outcomes**

HIA recommended:

- Supporting an ongoing resident council
- Providing a spot to share community information
- Creating spaces where people want to gather safely (e.g., splash pads, barbeque pits)
- Establishing a child care center on site
- Hiring local artists to create and display public art
4. Displacement Effects

Δ in homelessness

Δ in housing quality

Δ in housing expenditures

Δ in access to jobs and services

Δ in business environment

Δ in social support/cohesion

Δ in schools

Δ in living conditions

- Overcrowding
- Mold/mildew
- Sewage
- Vectors

Δ in poverty and inability to meet basic needs

- Healthy food
- Transportation
- Healthcare
- Child care
- Employment

Δ in sense of stability and belonging

Δ in sense of stability and belonging

Infectious disease

Chronic disease

Stress

Child development outcomes

• Health impacts of stress include: poor mental health, increased inflammatory response, decreased immune response
• Health impacts of chronic disease includes: heart disease, diabetes, hypertension

For more information:
www.healthimpactproject.org
www.humanimpact.org