

Health Impact Assessment as a Tool to Promote Equity

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Beyond Silos: Public Health Planners Working Together to
Create Healthy Communities for All
New Partners for Smart Growth Conference
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Health Impact Assessment

- A tool to increase partnerships and communication between public health professionals and planners and other decision-makers



A Vision of Health Impact Assessment

- Planners and elected officials will request information on potential health consequences of projects and policies as part of their decision-making process
- Local health officials will have a tool to facilitate their involvement in these decisions
- Public health will be at the table
- Better decisions will be made



Health Impact Assessment Definition

- HIA is a systematic process that uses an array of data sources and analytic methods and considers input from stakeholders to determine the potential effects of a proposed policy, plan, program, or project on the health of a population and the distribution of those effects within the population. HIA provides recommendations on monitoring and managing those effects.

National Academies Committee on HIA, 2011

Steps in Conducting an HIA

- **Screening**
 - Identify projects/policies for which HIA useful
- **Scoping**
 - Identify which health impacts to include
- **Assessment**
 - Identify how many and which people may be affected
 - Assess how they may be affected
- **Recommendations**
 - Identify changes to promote health or mitigate harm
- **Reporting** of results to decision-makers
- **Monitoring/Evaluation** of impact of HIA on decision process

Scoping: Health Impacts to Consider in an HIA

- Physical activity, obesity, cardiovascular disease
- Air quality, asthma, other respiratory diseases
- Water quality, waterborne diseases
- Food quality, foodborne diseases, nutrition
- Motor vehicle, pedestrian and other injuries
- Accessibility for persons with disabilities
- Social capital, community severance
- Access to jobs, stores, schools, recreation
- Social equity, environmental justice
- Mental health
- Noise



Voluntary vs. Regulatory Approach to Using an HIA

- Voluntary (a tool used by a health officer to inform a planning agency)
 - Simpler, less expensive, less litigious
 - Less likely to be used if not required
 - More politically acceptable
- Regulatory (modeled on a required environmental impact statement)
 - More complex, more expensive, more litigious
 - More likely to be used if required
 - May be less politically acceptable

Relationship of HIA to Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

- HIA components could logically and legally fit within an EIA process
- HIA incorporated into EIA is necessarily regulatory
- Incorporating health issues into current EIA process has been successful in some settings

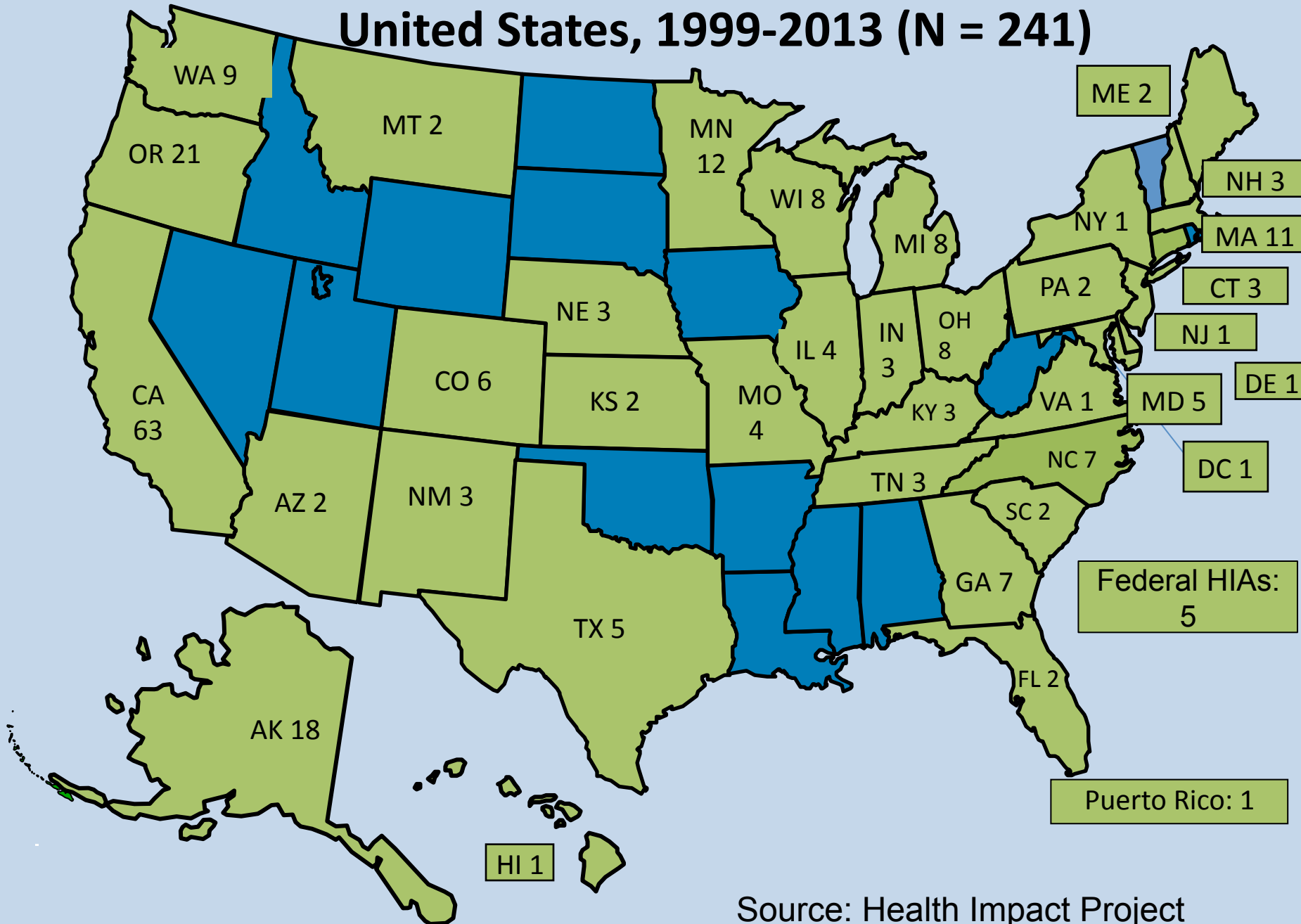
HIA Level of Complexity

- Qualitative – describe direction but not magnitude of predicted results
 - Easy to predict; hard to use in cost/benefit models
 - Example: Build a sidewalk and people will walk more
- Quantitative – describe direction and magnitude of predicted results
 - Difficult to obtain data; useful for cost/benefit models
 - Hypothetical example: Build a sidewalk and 300 people who live within 200 yards of location will walk an average of 15 extra minutes per day

Community Involvement in Conducting an HIA

- Increases community buy-in to project
- Helps identify social issues as well as health issues
- Routinely used in EIA process
- Commonly used in HIAs in Europe
- May add to time and resources needed to conduct HIA

Completed and In Progress HIAs United States, 1999-2013 (N = 241)



Source: Health Impact Project

Promoting Equity through the Practice of Health Impact Assessment

Jonathan Heller
Shireen Malekafzali
Lynn C. Todman
Megan Wier
44 pages
2013

www.policylink.org



HIA as a Tool for Equity

- Offers a unifying framework
- Provides robust research and accompanying recommendations
- Supports community leadership and participation in decision-making processes
- Fosters accountability and transparency in decision-making

Principles for Promoting Equity in HIA Practice

- Ensure community leadership, ownership, and participation of vulnerable populations (VP) in HIA
- Support participation of VPs in decision-making process
- Target HIAs to proposals relevant to VPs
- Ensure a goal of HIA is to understand VP health implications
- Ensure HIA assesses distribution of health impacts in VPs
- Identify recommendations for equitable distribution of health benefits for VPs
- Ensure findings and recommendations are conveyed to VPs
- Ensure impacts of the decision on VPs are monitored

Strategies for Implementing Equity Principles in HIA Practice

- Conduct HIA as partnership among HIA practitioners, equity advocates, and community leaders
- Share financial resources for leadership and participation in HIAs among VPs, equity advocates, and HIA practitioners
- Establish an oversight committee including VPs
- Ensure meetings are conducted to allow the full participation of and leadership by VPs
- Ensure HIA leadership and stakeholders include equity advocates and community reps able to communicate equity implications of HIA findings.

Strategies for Implementing Equity Principles in HIA Practice

- Incorporate training on the political process and timeline for the targeted decision
- Provide materials, training, and support for VPs to share their experiences with decision-makers
- Ensure that decision-making processes are designed to allow authentic participation of VPs
- Budget for capacity-building activities including leadership development and teaching research skills
- Ask community leaders to identify capacity-building needs

Challenges to Adhering to the Equity Principles in HIA

- Lack of capacity
- Institutional barriers
- Data gaps
- Power inequities
- Distrust and perceptions of bias

HIA of Trinity Plaza Housing Redevelopment

San Francisco Health Department

- 360 unit low-income apartments to be demolished to build new 1400 unit market-rate condominiums
- HIA found effects on housing affordability, stress, displacement of residents, food insecurity, and segregation
- After negotiation, developer received building permit and agreed to build one-for-one replacement units for low-income families being displaced



HIA of Proposed Redirection of Mass Transit Funding in California

UCLA School of Public Health

- Examined health impacts of loss of mass transit funds through legislative reallocation
- Findings
 - Identified multiple links between transit funding and obesity, CVD, respiratory conditions, and injuries
 - Many uncertainties in quantitative estimates
 - Reallocation could improve health if used for health care for uninsured children
- Impact: Legislature approved reallocation of funds prior to completion of HIA

HIA of Los Angeles Football Stadium



Context

“Farmers Field”, 72,000-seat football stadium in downtown LA. Local community organizations (LA CAN, LAFLA, PSR-LA) work with HIP to conduct an HIA on stadium proposal.



Analysis

Issues being ignored by existing analyses: gentrification, displacement; employment; housing; public safety; access to open space. Rapid HIA conducted within 45 day comment period; responding to 10,000 page environmental document

Outcomes

- HIA used in campaign that secured: \$15 million for affordable housing; \$5 million for parks/open space, neighborhood improvement plans, funding for a community team to promote health and protect tenant rights in the area; and local hiring commitments
- Media campaign brought attention to issues addressed in the HIA
- Residents from surrounding neighborhoods highly engaged

HIA of Housing Rental Voucher Program

Child Health Impact Working Group, Boston

- Examined impact of changes to Massachusetts housing rental assistance program for families who would be homeless or live in substandard houses
- Qualitative and quantitative assessment
- Findings: Program alterations may lead to reduced program eligibility, increased housing instability, and adverse effects on children's health
- Results contributed to state's decision to not further restrict program eligibility

HIA of Coal-Fired Power Plant

McLeod and Simmons, Healthy Development, Inc.

- Examined health impacts of proposed 800 megawatt coal-fired power plant in Florida
- Rapid, quantitative assessment
- Findings: Fine particulate matter pollution containing SO₂ will decrease life expectancy by 2 days after 16 years of plant operation
- HIA recommended hiring local minority workers to improve local economic and health conditions
- Project proponent accepted HIA recommendations but project subsequently cancelled due to climate change concerns

**Health Impact Assessments
can help guide community
design choices to promote
human health and equity**



**www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/hia.htm
www.healthimpactproject.org**