Health Impact Assessment (HIA) 
A Tool to Benefit Health in all Policies

HIA is a “combination of procedures, methods, and tools by which a policy, program, or project may be judged as to its potential effects on the health of a population, and the distribution of those effects within the population. HIA identifies actions to manage those effects.”


Almost everything shapes our health—where we work, play, pray, and live. By gathering the right information to gain an understanding of how policies and programs affect our health, decision-makers can promote policies and plans that improve and protect—rather than harm—health for all.

The full spectrum of health considerations are often unintentionally overlooked in decision-making. And their omission can lead to policies and practices that are unnecessarily harmful to people, and costly to society. HIA has emerged as a critical tool in preserving and improving public health, because it helps decision-makers—especially those in non-health sectors—consider the health consequences of different options, and can encourage them to opt for sound choices that can protect and improve future health.

Get the Facts

• ‘Health in All Policies’: A Gold Standard
  “Health in All Policies” is a sweeping goal that aims to help decision-makers understand the links between policies and interventions, health determinants and the resulting health outcomes in a wide range of focus areas. The European Union is assessing Health in all Policies and the use of HIA in a project titled Europe for Health and Wealth. In the United States, Health in All Policies cuts across a wide swath of policies including: Transportation, Energy, Climate Change, Health Care, Housing, Education, and Defense.


• The World Health Organization (WHO) supports the use of HIA. “Health is influenced by a wide range of determinants—social, environmental, lifestyle and individual factors. Health is more than an absence of illness. HIA draws on the social model of health and well-being and aims to ensure these ‘determinants’ are considered in policy and planning decision making.”

• HIA is an emerging and promising practice. However, it currently is more widely used in Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada than in the United States. Efforts are underway across the globe to advance the field of HIA by increasing capacity and developing guidelines and best practices.
HIA Projects in the USA and Key Issue Areas

**HIA Basics**

HIA follows the same basic steps.

- Screening: Quickly establishes health relevance of the policy or project. Is HIA required?
- Scoping: Identifies key health issues and public concerns, establishes terms of reference, sets boundaries
- Appraisal: Rapid or in-depth assessment of health impacts using available evidence—who will be affected, baseline, prediction, significance, mitigation.
- Reporting: Conclusions and recommendations to increase/mitigate negative impacts on health or to enhance positive impacts.
- Monitoring: Action, where appropriate, to monitor actual impacts on health to enhance existing evidence base.

The HIA process varies in scale and scope.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mini, desktop</th>
<th>Maxi, comprehensive, inclusive</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rapid</td>
<td>Lengthy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Single health outcome</td>
<td>Multiple outcomes</td>
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<tr>
<td>One person</td>
<td>A range of stakeholders, including community</td>
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<tr>
<td>Simple model</td>
<td>A range of models and tools</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quick decision</td>
<td>In-depth, consensus-based decision</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inexpensive</td>
<td>Expensive</td>
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Source: Adapted from WHO, Health Impact Assessment Tools and Methods

**APHA Supports**

- A designated agency in the White House or Health and Human Services (HHS) to lead and coordinate HIA efforts in the United States
- Investment in HIA-based research, practice, and training
- Identification and implementation of an HIA research agenda

**Issue Areas**

- Housing redevelopment
- Highway corridor redevelopment
- Pedestrian/bicycle trail development
- Highway bridge replacement
- Transit line
- Community transportation plan
- Local area and comprehensive plans

- After-school programs
- Living wage ordinance
- Paid sick leave
- Coal-fired power plant
- Low-income home energy subsidies
- Oil and gas leasing policies

**RWJF and PEW Charitable Trusts** are launching a national initiative in the fall 2009 to demonstrate the value of HIA as a tool in effecting policy to improve health.