



The goal of this module is to understand what an HIA is and the benefits and value of conducting an HIA when making decisions about policy and projects.

In this module we will address the following objectives:

- *Determine when and why an HIA should be used*
- *Identify the values that underpin an HIA*
- *Describe the impact of an HIA on the decision making process*
- *Define the role of the community*
- *Determine when to use or not use an HIA*
- *Identify the HIA steps*
- *Describe the relationship of an HIA to an EIA*

Public Health and Planning

Movements that encourage incorporating health concerns into planning:

- New urbanism
- Smart growth



Movements that encourage incorporating health concerns into planning.

New urbanism... smart growth.. Words that we read in the papers, hear on the news, and from the mouths of politicians. It's happening across the country and in our neighborhoods.

Public Health and Planning

Commonly used planning terms:

- Sprawl
- Land Use
- Density
- Connectivity



Questions We Have to Ask...

- What is the effect of sprawl on the physical fitness of the residents?
- What happens when you tear down low income housing for high density, high cost buildings?
- Is the health of the population affected if we connect our neighborhoods with workplaces and shopping areas?



Questions We Have to Ask...

- What are the effects on health when green spaces are included in neighborhoods?
- What is the effect to the health of a community if more lanes are added to a highway?



What is a HIA?

An HIA is a combination of procedures, methods and tools by which a policy 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.

WHO Gothenberg consensus paper 1999



Let's review what we mean by an HIA.

HIAs are increasingly popular as communities, builders, and politicians weigh the health implications of policies and projects. Whether the policy is to require mandatory physical education classes in a middle school or a project to revitalize a shopping center, there are health implications that are often been ignored.

An HIA is a tool to evaluate objectively a project or policy before it is implemented so that evidence-based findings and recommendations can influence decision-making. HIAs:

- Encompass a variety of methods and tools.
- Have been performed extensively in Europe, Canada and other countries.
- Bring potential health impacts to the attention of policy-makers, particularly when they are not already recognized or are otherwise unexpected.

How Can You Use an HIA?

You can use an HIA to focus the attention of decision-makers on the health consequences of the projects and policies they are considering. An HIA should lead to a better informed decision with respect to health.



When is it Appropriate to Conduct an HIA?

- As early as practical in decision making process
- When decision makers ask for an HIA
- After sufficient details about the project or policy are defined
- When conducting ongoing work with decision makers and planners
- When new or unfamiliar information provided by an HIA has the potential to affect decisions

HIA is of little value when everyone is already familiar with the information provided by the HIA and when decision-makers and stakeholders are not open to reconsidering plans.

Think of a project or policy that you believe would have been better executed if there had been an HIA. When should an HIA have been initiated and who should have initiated the process?

Let's Explore HIAs in More Detail...

- What are the underlying values of an HIA?
- What impact do HIAs have?
- What is the role of the community in the process?
- How do HIAs compare to Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs)?



What Values Underpin an HIA?

- Democracy
- Equity
- Sustainable development
- Scientific and robust practice
- Holistic approach to health

Source: National Institutes for Health and Clinical Excellence



The values that underpin an HIA.

As you begin to learn more about an HIA, remember that there are core values at the heart of each HIA.

Democracy - the right of people to participate in the formulation of policies that affect their life, both directly and through elected decision-makers. This means that the community plays a major role in HIA process.

Equity - the reduction of inequity that results from avoidable and unjust differences in health status between different people. An HIA assesses the distribution of impacts from a proposed policy or project with a particular reference to how the proposed policy or project will affect vulnerable people (in terms of age, gender, ethnic background, and socio-economic status).

Sustainable development - emphasizing that development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

Scientific and robust practice - emphasizing that transparent, systematic and impartial processes are used, which utilize the best available evidence from different scientific disciplines and methodologies.

Holistic approach to health - health is determined by a broad range of factors from all sectors of society.

Source: National Institutes for Health and Clinical Excellence

What are the Benefits of Including the Community in an HIA?

- Increases buy-in
- Helps identify social issues as well as health issues
- Addresses community concerns
- Builds community capacity



The benefits of an HIA.

As we saw on the previous page, democracy, and therefore community plays a major role in a successful HIA. Much of the work of an HIA is grounded in community organizing. Because the community should be part of the oversight of the HIA process, it is critical to have representatives of the community involved throughout the process.

Example: For instance the owner of a deteriorating strip mall wants to revitalize the area by building a four story building with shops on the street level and offices and apartments above. When the plans were presented to the city council for approval, the community was there, in force, protesting the design of the project. They saw high rises and density coming to their neighborhood and they were not happy.

By including the community at the beginning of the HIA the project plan could have addressed some of the community concerns and help avoid problems.

In this scenario, the HIA is used by local public health agencies to advance land use planning with a close partnership with community organizations.

The primary goal of such partnerships are building community capacity and increasing efficacy.

What are the Challenges of Including the Community in an HIA?

- May substantially add to time and resources needed to conduct an HIA
- At times, lay and expert knowledge may come into conflict
- It may be difficult to identify and engage all stakeholders in a timely manner



The challenges of conducting an HIA.

It's always a good idea to include community, but it is not without headaches. There's nothing like a land use issue to bring a community to its feet.

Involving the community requires more time and resources. It also invites conflict as lay and expert knowledge come into conflict.

Environmental Impact Assessments

- 1969 National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Requires Environmental Impact Assessments
- The purpose of NEPA is to protect the “human environment” and “stimulate the health and welfare of man” (NEPA, 1979, sec. 2)

Environmental Impact Assessments

Environmental Impact Assessments

- Under NEPA, A federal agency must:
 - Evaluate the potential environmental consequences of their proposals
 - Consider alternatives to their proposed action
 - Document their analysis
 - Make their analysis available to the public for comment prior to implementation

NEPA requirements

Bringing Health to EIA: Opportunities for Involvement

- Assisting in the development of health-related sections of an EIA as a “Cooperating Agency”
- Participating in public review of an EIA during scoping and review of draft EIAs
- Providing technical support to other agencies and stakeholder groups involved in the preparation and review of an EIA

Relationship of health and EIA

Relationship of HIA to Environmental Impact Assessment

- HIA components could logically fit within an EIA but.....
 - Long, complex documents
 - Time-consuming, expensive and litigious
 - Focus on projects not policies
 - Focus on adverse effects
 - Often too late to affect design
 - Funded by decision proponent
 - “Reactive” public involvement

Yes...HIAs have an Impact

- Influence decision-makers
- Highlight potential health impacts
- Assess how proposals will affect community members and specified at risk subpopulations
- Facilitate collaboration and public participation in decision-making
- Promote sustainable development
- Encourage appreciation of public health in the decision making process
- Raise awareness of health issues with regard to the built environment



HIA Impacts

However, there are times HIAs do not have an influence on the decisions that are made. Health is often put on the back burner for reasons such as money, time and political will.

Steps in Completing an HIA Include:

- Screening
- Scoping
- Assessment
- Reporting
- Evaluation

The five steps of the HIA process include:

- *Screening* - identify a project or policy for which an HIA would be useful
- *Scoping* - identify which health impact(s) should be included
- *Assessment* – identify which people may be affected and assess how their health may be affected
- *Reporting* - create reports suitable in length and depth for the various target audiences
- *Evaluation* - document the impact of the HIA on the decisions made on the project or policy and can also include evaluation of the HIA process and, more rarely, outcome evaluation.
