Introduction to HIA Concepts and Approaches

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Health impact assessment is

- Focused on public policy decisions and population health outcomes;
- Is a multidisciplinary process;
- Considers a wide range of evidence;
- Uses a structured framework;
- Based on a broad model of health.
Why use HIA?

- Influence decision-makers;
- Highlight potentially significant health impacts;
- Assess how proposals will affect the most vulnerable;
- Facilitate inter-sectoral working and public participation;
- Promote sustainable development;
- Encourage a greater appreciation of public health in the policy-making process.
An HIA might ask...

1. What are the potential health effects of a proposal to change sales tax revenue? (general assessment of impacts)

2. Do state-funded after-school programs yield significant health benefits? (significance)

3. Are the health benefits and risks distributed equitably or in a way that minimizes current disparities in health risks and conditions? (equity)

4. What are the health consequences of the current set of agricultural subsidies? (impacts of current policies)

5. What elements of school site design are most cost-effective in encouraging physical activity? (cost-effectiveness)
Means of HIA

- Evaluation and synthesis of existing research

- Comparative data analysis

- Consultation with policy-makers, experts, stakeholders, etc.
Information for decision-making under uncertainty

- Decisions will be made with or without HIA. Should they be made with or without available information about potential health impacts?

- Forthright about the limits;

- Learning from other types of analyses that project potential effects of policy actions
  - Risk analysis (environmental, safety, financial)
  - Cost-effectiveness analysis
  - Legislative budget analysis
  - Environmental impact analysis
Disciplinary foundations of HIA

- Risk Analysis, Epidemiology, etc.
- Evidence-based Reviews
- Environmental Impact Assessment
- Community-based Health Promotion e.g. “Healthy Cities”

Health Impact Assessment
HIA Approaches

1. Quantitative/Analytic
   ◆ Based on risk analysis and epidemiology

2. Participatory
   ◆ Rooted in community health promotion, esp.
     “Healthy Cities”
   ◆ Dominant HIA model in Sweden, UK

3. Procedural
   ◆ Hybrid. Often linked to EIA
   ◆ Being developed in Canada, Australia, NZ
Steps in HIA

- **Screening**
  » Determining if an HIA should occur

- **Scoping**
  » Determining what to do and how to do it

- **Impact assessment**
  » Determining health hazards and considering evidence of impact

- **Reporting and review**
  » Producing a coherent, usable synthesis of findings from the analysis for target audiences (e.g. policy-makers)

- **Evaluation and monitoring**
  » Determining whether the HIA has influenced the decision making process (and the subsequent proposal)
  » Monitoring the implementation of the proposal to ensure that any recommendations that decision-makers agreed to actually occur