

# Health Impact Assessment for Healthy Places: A Guide for Planning and Public Health

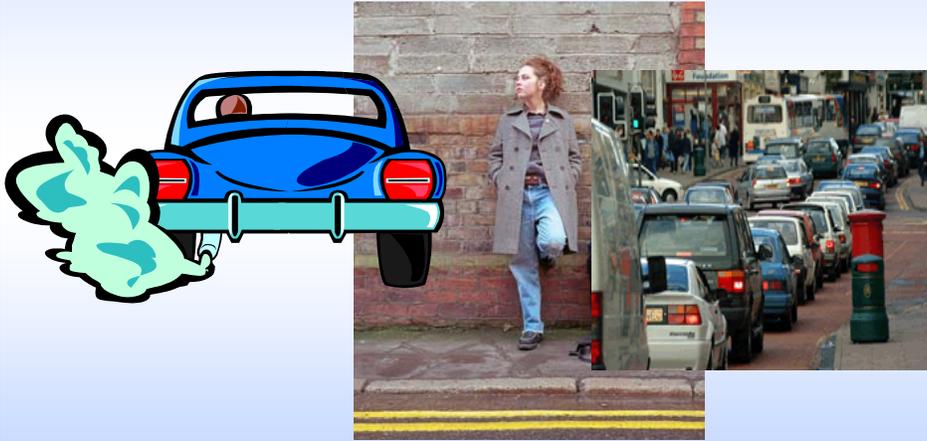


## Getting To Know You and Your Project

1. Each team will stand up and tell us your **names** and **where you're from**.
2. Each team member will tell us one zany **fact about the community of your project**.



## Module 1: HIA — What and Why?



## HIA in the USA

- There was a realization that some of our health problems are the result of our built environment
- The British have a longer history of conducting HIAs and have taught us much about the process
- The world of planning and public health have much to learn from each other
- HIA is a new and emerging science in the US. YOU are helping design this field

## Public Health and Planning

Movements that encourage incorporating health concerns into planning

- New urbanism
- Smart growth



## Public Health and Planning

Some of the elements of development linking planning and public health

- Sprawl
- Land use
- Density
- Connectivity
- Economic activity



## 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 our health when we include green spaces in our neighborhoods?
- What is the effect to the health of our community if more lanes are added to a highway?



## What does this mean for us, today, and in this room?



## 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



## What is a HIA?

- HIA is a process
- HIA products used to summarize and communicate the results of the analysis may include:
  - Policy briefs
  - Visual presentations (slides, videos, posters, etc.)
  - Expert testimony
  - Reports (of varying length and complexity)
  - Spreadsheets and other interactive tools that decision-makers and stakeholders understand potential impacts

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***All supported by sound, balanced assessment of the best available evidence***

## 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
- Ideally 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
- When an HIA is required

## An HIA in Practice

Let's look at an example to see how an HIA works in the real world.



## What Happened in One Neighborhood...



A city plans to develop a run-down neighborhood. It will involve demolishing 3 blocks of dilapidated retail shops, an aging supermarket, and 200 low income housing units.



### HIA Findings

- Many low income people would be displaced.

### Impact the HIA had on development

- Development plans were formulated to include low income housing.

## 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 does an HIA compare to an EIA?



## 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



## What are the benefits of including the community in an HIA?

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



## What are the challenges of including the community in an HIA?

- Including community 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



## 1969 National Environmental Policy Act Requires An EIA

- The purpose of NEPA is to protect the “human environment” and “stimulate the health and welfare of man” (NEPA, 1979, sec. 2)



## **1969 National Environmental Policy Act Requires An EIA**

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

## **State-level Versions of NEPA Like CEQA in California Require EIA as Well**

In California, a public agency must:

- Analyze all potential adverse environmental consequences of discretionary decisions including cumulative and indirect effects
- Consider alternatives and mitigations
- Support analysis with evidence
- Respond to public comment prior to implementation
- Document findings



## **“Environmental Effects” under NEPA includes Health and Health Relevant Effects**

- Effects are Ecological, Aesthetic, Historical, Cultural, Economic, Social, or effects on Health
- Effects include the relationship of people with the environment, including environmental justice issues
- Effects are direct and indirect
- Effects can be cumulative resulting “... from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions.”

## **Health Effects Analysis is also required under CEQA**

- (a) A lead agency shall find that a project may have a significant effect on the environment and thereby require an EIR to be prepared for the project where there is substantial evidence, in light of the whole record, that any of the following conditions may occur:
- (4) The environmental effects of a project will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15065



## **EIA understands the need to consider Indirect and Complex Causal Pathways**

- Where a physical change is caused by economic or social effects of a project, the physical change may be regarded as a significant effect in the same manner as any other physical change resulting from the project.
- If the physical change causes adverse economic or social effects on people, those adverse effects may be used as a factor in determining whether the physical change is significant.



CEQA Guidelines section 15064

## **Social Impact Assessment Practice Exists Under NEPA**

- NEPA recognizes of inter-dependence of social and physical effects
- Some federal agencies have promoted integrated analysis
- Federal Guidance exists for Social Impact Assessment under NEPA
- FHWA has guidance for Community Impact Assessment under NEPA

## Many reasons explain the absence of Health Analysis in EIA

- Environmentalist Roots
- EIA focus on the physical environment
- Public Health focus on individuals
- No Mandates, standards, or guidance (in contrast to effects on air quality, endangered species, vehicle traffic flow, etc.)
- No development of analytic tools



## 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



## Historical Problems with EIA

- “Boilerplate” analysis
- Not context specific
- Mirrors established regulations
- Focus on adverse effects
- No assessment of trade-offs
- Happens too late to affect design
- Funded by decision proponent
- “Reactive” public involvement



## Putting Health in EIA: Some Next Steps

- Identify key pathways between environmental effects and health effects relevant for EIA
- Develop and apply new methods for exposure analysis and health effects forecasting using inter-disciplinary methods
- Develop qualitative research methods
- Identify routine data sources
- Engage the “community” in research
- Work towards better guidance and standards

## 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 how the built environment affects health.



## Steps in Completing an HIA include:

1. Screening
2. Scoping
3. Assessment
4. Reporting
5. Evaluation

**TABLE ACTIVITY:**  
**What Do You Expect from  
this HIA training?**

