

The Value of Health Impact Assessment to Local Health Departments



Overview

This document explains how health impact assessment (HIA) is a valuable tool local health departments (LHDs) can use to improve community health, meet certain standards and measures of public health accreditation, develop partnerships, and enhance cross-sector awareness.

Health impact assessment: 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 for managing and monitoring those effects.¹

Health Department Accreditation

As HIA becomes a widespread practice for assessing policies, programs, plans, and projects within communities, LHDs have the opportunity to better document HIA activities to achieve or maintain accreditation by the Public Health Accreditation Board. Completing an HIA generates a range of documentation that can establish evidence that meet certain standards and measures for public health accreditation. For example, an HIA might produce health data summaries, survey data summaries, data analyses, meeting agendas, committee minutes, dated distribution lists, attendance logs, brochures, flyers, website screen prints, news releases, posters, and policies that can be used as documentation during the accreditation process. However, siloing within a health department can prevent HIA practitioners and accreditation coordinators from efficiently maximizing the data collection, analysis, evaluation, and community engagement activities led throughout the HIA

process. Therefore, it is important that HIA practitioners understand how an HIA can overlap with certain standards and measures of accreditation, and that accreditation coordinators become aware of the multiple potential uses for HIA.²

Partnerships: Sustainable Impact

Partnerships are key to the success and longevity of a LHD's work. Often the large, complex health problems that LHDs deal with are impossible to tackle alone and the resources of one agency are insufficient. Using HIA promotes the sharing of resources and a common vision, encouraging partners to consider the health impacts of a project, program, or policy at the same level as they would economic or environmental impacts. Additionally, the establishment and sustaining of partnerships can create opportunities to align with future funding streams toward a common goal.



Funding Intersections

- Food Access (Healthy Retail, SNAP-Ed, Policy work)
- School-based opportunities (Safe Routes to School, Farm to School, Curriculum Development)
- Active Living Work (Policy Work, Complete Streets)
- Substance Abuse Prevention

[FACT SHEET]

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Cross-Sector Awareness

Working with partners on HIA provides occasions to work with non-health sectors, increase awareness of shared priorities, and the expand the breadth of collective impact. Depending on the topic of the HIA, practitioners often develop cross-sector partnerships with (1) land use and transportation planners; (2) engineers; (3) school personnel; (4) community members; and (5) elected officials. Cross-sector work through HIA creates opportunities to find common ground, consider health implications, and promote the larger message of health in all policies.

References

1. National Research Council (US) Committee on Health Impact Assessment. (2011). *Improving health in the United States: The role of health impact assessment*. National Academies Press (US).
2. NACCHO. (2016). *Crosswalk between Public Health Accreditation and Health Impact Assessment* [fact sheet]. Available at http://www.naccho.org/uploads/full-width-images/report_HIAccreditation_june2016_160907_133720.pdf

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For more information about HIA, visit NACCHO's HIA webpage at <http://www.naccho.org/programs/community-health/healthy-community-design/health-impact-assessment>.

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