Health Impact Assessment:
A Practical Framework for Identifying Environmental Human Health Effects & Relevant Policy Solutions

Kara Vonasek, M.P.H.
Project Manager
Health Impact Project
www.healthimpactproject.org
Outline

• Context for HIA
• What is HIA?
• Steps of HIA
• Examples of HIA
• Integrating HIA into EIA
• Key Points about HIA
County Health Rankings

RWJF and University of Wisconsin Madison:
www.countyhealthrankings.org/about-project/background
HIA Addresses Determinants of Health

How does the proposed project, plan, policy affect:
- Housing
- Air quality
- Noise
- Safety
- Social networks
- Nutrition
- Parks and natural space
- Private goods and services
- Public services
- Transportation
- Livelihood
- Water quality
- Education
- Inequities

and lead to health outcomes
HIA is 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 on monitoring and managing those effects.

[National Academies: Committee on Health Impact Assessment]
The HIA Process

- **Screening**: establishes the need for and value of conducting an HIA
- **Scoping**: identifies the populations that might be affected, determines which health effects will be evaluated in the HIA
- **Assessment**: describes baseline health conditions of affected populations; characterizes expected health effects of the proposal relative to the baseline
- **Recommendations**: identifies alternatives to the proposal or specific actions that could be taken to avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse effects AND maximize health benefits of a proposal
- **Reporting**: communicates findings and recommendations to decision-makers, the public, and other stakeholders
- **Monitoring and Evaluation**: monitors results of HIA, monitors health outcomes; evaluates the HIA process
Authors: Human Impact Partners & SFDPH

Decision: Plan for 61 new senior housing units close to 2 freeways & Port of Oakland

Impacts: Air quality; noise; safety; retail access

Recommendations: Noise-insulating windows; pedestrian protection medians; traffic calming measures; air quality monitoring; installation of ventilation systems; and many others

Outcomes:
- Many recommendations adopted
- Additional HIA projects were funded
- Healthy Development Checklist adopted by the development committee
Integrating HIA into EIA

National Academies – National Research Council Committee on HIA Report Findings:

- The U.S. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and some related state laws explicitly require the identification and analysis of health effects when environmental impact assessment (EIA) is conducted.

- Improving the integration of health into EIA practice under NEPA and related state laws is needed and would advance the goal of improving public health.
Case Study: Integrating HIA into EIA

Decision: BLM proposed expanded oil leasing in Alaska’s North Slope, triggering an EIS

Impact: contamination of local food sources, dietary changes, social ills, air pollution, increased tax revenue

Outcomes:
- Tribal gov’t became a “cooperating agency” allows formal role in EIS
- Compromise leasing plan reached
- The lead federal agency incorporated the HIA into the EIS
- New requirements for monitoring AQ & oil contaminants in subsistence foods, worker ed. prog.
Key Points About HIA

1. HIA can be successfully applied to a wide array of topics
   • It’s not just about land use and transportation projects

2. It’s not for EVERY decision

3. HIA works in the setting of real time planning and decision-making.
   • Flexible (scope can be scaled to fit available time and resources)
   • Solutions-oriented and realistic (can actually speed approval of a project/decision)

4. It’s an effective tool for lasting cross-sector collaboration

5. It helps ensure the correct type of data is collected to facilitate better management of health effects
Discussion?

Kara Vonasek
kvonasek@pewtrusts.org
Phone: 202.540.6379
www.healthimpactproject.org