

Get The Facts

Health Impact Assessment (HIA)

A Tool to Benefit Health in all Policies

HIA is a “combination of procedures, methods, and tools by which a policy, program, 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. HIA identifies actions to manage those effects.”

*Source: 1999 Gothenburg consensus statement, <http://www.euro.who.int/document/PAE/Gothenburgpaper.pdf>; International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA). *Health Impact Practice Principles*. IAIA Special Publication Series No. 5. September 2006.*

Almost everything shapes our health—where we work, play, pray, and live. By gathering the right information to gain an understanding of how policies and programs affect our health, decision-makers can promote policies and plans that improve and protect—rather than harm—health for all.

The full spectrum of health considerations are often unintentionally overlooked in decision-making. And their omission can lead to policies and practices that are unnecessarily harmful to people, and costly to society. HIA has emerged as a critical tool in preserving and improving public health, because it helps decision-makers—especially those in non-health sectors—consider the health consequences of different options, and can encourage them to opt for sound choices that can protect and improve future health.

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- **‘Health in All Policies’: A Gold Standard**

“Health in All Policies” is a sweeping goal that aims to help decision-makers understand the links between policies and interventions, health determinants and the resulting health outcomes in a wide range of focus areas. The European Union is assessing Health in all Policies and the use of HIA in a project titled *Europe for Health and Wealth*. In the United States, Health in All Policies cuts across a wide swath of policies including: Transportation, Energy, Climate Change, Health Care, Housing, Education, and Defense.

Source: http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_projects/2005/action1/action1_2005_18_en.htm#3

- **The World Health Organization (WHO) supports the use of HIA.** “Health is influenced by a wide range of determinants—social, environmental, lifestyle and individual factors. Health is more than an absence of illness. HIA draws on the social model of health and well-being and aims to ensure these ‘determinants’ are considered in policy and planning decision making.”

- **HIA is an emerging and promising practice.**

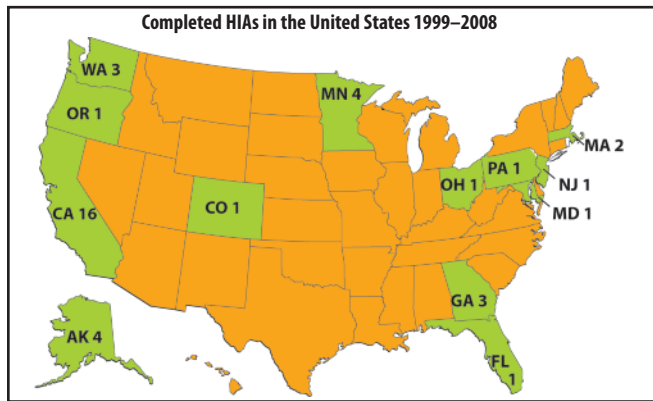
However, it currently is more widely used in Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada than in the United States. Efforts are underway across the globe to advance the field of HIA by increasing capacity and developing guidelines and best practices.



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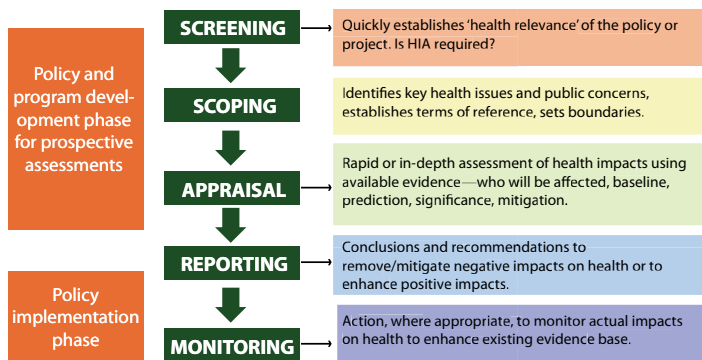
HIA Projects in the USA and Key Issue Areas



- **The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** is working to advance the field of HIA and expand its use in the United States. CDC provides technical assistance, maintains a Web site on HIA, and is piloting the use of HIA in several communities across the country.
- **Several states — California, Washington, Oregon and Maryland,** have used HIA as part of their policymaking process.

HIA Basics

HIA follows the same basic steps.



Source: Adapted from WHO, Health Impact Assessment Tools and Methods

APHA Supports

- A designated agency in the White House or Health and Human Services (HHS) to lead and coordinate HIA efforts in the United States
- Investment in HIA-based research, practice, and training
- Identification and implementation of an HIA research agenda
- Building of HIA capacity at local, state, and federal levels
- Grants for HIA demonstration projects
- Identification of HIA best practices
- Establishment of guidelines and standards for HIA practice

Issue Areas

- Housing redevelopment
- Highway corridor redevelopment
- Pedestrian/bicycle trail development
- Highway bridge replacement
- Transit line
- Community transportation plan
- Local area and comprehensive plans
- After-school programs
- Living wage ordinance
- Paid sick leave
- Coal-fired power plant
- Low-income home energy subsidies
- Oil and gas leasing policies

- **RWJF and PEW Charitable Trusts** are launching a national initiative in the fall 2009 to demonstrate the value of HIA as a tool in effecting policy to improve health.

Sources: CDC NCEH/ATSDR <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/hia.htm>, WHO <http://www.who.int/hia/en/>, Human Impact Partners <http://www.humanimpact.org/>, UCLA <http://www.ph.ucla.edu/hs/health-impact/>, NACCHO <http://www.naccho.org/topics/environmental/landuseplanning/HIAresources.cfm>

The HIA process varies in scale and scope.

Mini, desktop	Maxi, comprehensive, inclusive
Rapid	Lengthy
Single health outcome	Multiple outcomes
One person	A range of stakeholders, including community
Simple model	A range of models and tools
Quick decision	In-depth, consensus-based decision
Inexpensive	Expensive



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