



INTRODUCTION

Health in All Policies

Health in All Policies (HiAP) is an encompassing approach that extends beyond the boundaries of the public health sector. HiAP can be defined as a collaborative approach that integrates and articulates health considerations into policy making and programming across sectors, and at all levels, to improve the health of all communities and people. HiAP requires public health practitioners to collaborate with other sectors to define and achieve mutually beneficial goals.

Background

In recent years, research has started to illuminate the connection between the health of communities and a multitude of factors beyond health care and the scope of traditional public health activities. Public health practitioners, researchers, and policy makers have started to look more closely at the root causes of chronic diseases and other conditions facing our society, and recognize environmental and social and circumstances as major contributors.

Lack of access to adequate housing and public transportation, neighborhoods where the built environment prevents safe physical activity and agricultural practices that contaminate food and water are all examples of modern day environmental conditions that significantly impact health. However, none of these fall under the purview of any one single agency or organization.

Thus, fully addressing the health consequences and benefits of all public projects, policies and programs to improve population health will require that diverse sectors work together to address complex issues.

The National Prevention Strategy (NPS)

Similar to HiAP, NPS called for in the Affordable Care Act and created by the National Prevention Council, aims to guide our nation in the most effective and achievable means for improving health and well-being. The NPS envisions a prevention-oriented society where all sectors recognize the value of health for individuals, families and society and work together to achieve better health for all Americans.

The NPS encourages integrating health criteria into community planning and decision making, and identifies Healthy and Safe Community Environments as part of the foundation for all of our nation's prevention efforts.

State and Territorial Health Agencies

State and territorial health agencies (STHAs) have a major role to play in HiAP. STHAs are the primary protectors and promoters of basic environmental health services to communities, including protecting food and water, preparing for climate change and promoting safe and healthy physical environments.

Turn for more »

Although implementing HiAP strategies can be challenging, STHAs can embrace the challenge and take a leading role to improve the long-term health of communities.

They are well-suited to integrate health protection and health equity activities across their agency. STHAs regularly inform state-level policy, create new programs and initiatives, serve as liaisons to federal agencies, and provide support to local health departments, all of which are crucial to a comprehensive HiAP approach.

Environmental Health and Health in All Policies

Environmental health is concerned with how interactions between humans and their environments impact human health. The field emerged to protect people from chemical or biological threats in their environment like air pollution and waterborne diseases. More recently, the field focuses on creating health promoting environments, such as homes, workplaces, schools, neighborhoods and communities.

Human-environment interactions are complex, and issues are often under the jurisdiction of multiple agencies or organizations. For example, environmental agencies may be responsible for air and water quality and natural resource agencies for energy creation. Therefore, improving overall population health necessitates cross-sectoral collaboration on policies, programs, and projects. HiAP provides a framework for working with other sectors to address these multifaceted issues.

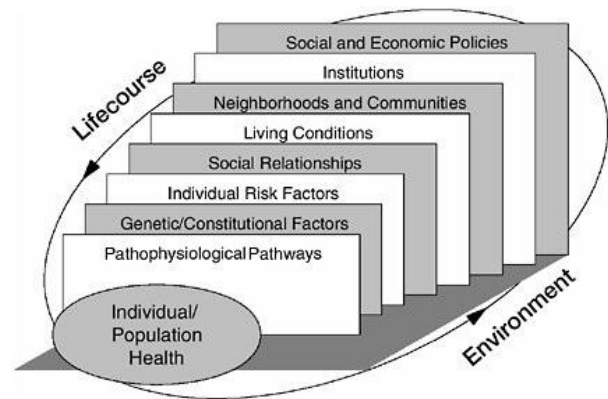


Figure 1. The broad range of health determinants under the scope of the environment¹

Health in All Policies Key Messages

- All policy is health policy.
- HiAP is an approach, a process and a philosophy.
- Everyone has a role to play in improving the health of our communities.
- Health begins with where we live, learn, work and play.
- Coordinating efforts across sectors is a way to improve the efficiency of government processes and services.
- A preventative approach saves money in the long-term.
- Public health and other sectors can work together to identify mutual goals, and integrate health considerations upfront into their own work and values.
- Public health is “what we as a society do to collectively assure the conditions in which people can be healthy.”²
- Health is “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”³

1. Institute of Medicine. 2000. Promoting Health: Intervention Strategies from Social and Behavioral Research, p. 43. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

2. Institute of Medicine. 1988. The Future of Public Health. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

3. World Health Organization. 1946. WHO definition of Health, Preamble to the Constitution of the World Health Organization as adopted by the International Health Conference, New York, 19–22 June 1946; signed on 22 July 1946 by the representatives of 61 States (Official Records of the World Health Organization, no. 2, p. 100) and entered into force on 7 April 1948.

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