

Health Impact Assessments: How Communities and Government Can Work Together To Improve Community Design

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Health Impact Assessment

- A tool to increase partnerships and communication between public health professionals and planners and other decision-makers



Health Impact Assessment Definition

- Collection of procedures and tools by which projects, policies, and programs can be evaluated based on their potential effects on the health of a population, and the distribution of those effects within the population

Gothenburg consensus statement, 1999

A Vision of Health Impact Assessment

- Planners and others will request information on potential health consequences of projects and policies as part of their decision-making process
- Health officials will have a tool to facilitate their involvement in planning and land use decisions
- HIAs will lead to a better informed decisions

Steps in Conducting an HIA

- Screening
 - Identify projects/policies for which HIA useful
- Scoping
 - Identify which health impacts to include
- Risk assessment
 - Identify how many and which people may be affected
 - Assess how they may be affected
- Recommendations
 - Identify changes to promote health or mitigate harm
- Reporting of results to decision-makers
- Evaluation of impact of HIA on decision process

Scoping: Health Impacts to Consider in an HIA

- Physical activity, obesity, cardiovascular disease
- Air quality, asthma, other respiratory diseases
- Water quality, waterborne diseases
- Food quality, foodborne diseases, nutrition
- Motor vehicle, pedestrian and other injuries
- Accessibility for persons with disabilities
- Social capital, community severance
- Access to jobs, stores, schools, recreation
- Social equity, environmental justice
- Mental health
- Noise



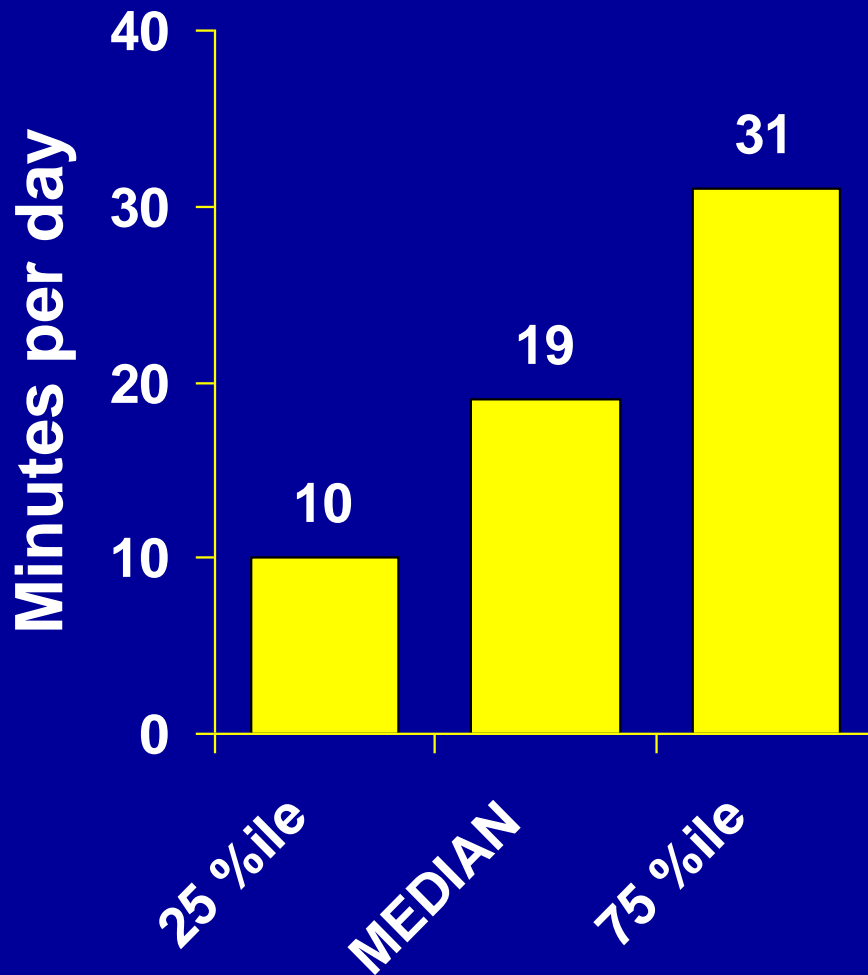
Voluntary vs. Regulatory Approach to Using an HIA

- Voluntary (a tool used by a health officer to inform a planning agency)
 - Simpler, less expensive, less litigious
 - Less likely to be used if not required
 - More politically acceptable
- Regulatory (modeled on a required environmental impact statement)
 - More complex, more expensive, more litigious
 - More likely to be used if required
 - May be less politically acceptable

HIA Level of Complexity

- Qualitative – describe direction but not magnitude of predicted results
 - Easy to predict; hard to use in cost/benefit models
 - Example: Build a sidewalk and people will walk more
- Quantitative – describe direction and magnitude of predicted results
 - Difficult to obtain data; useful for cost/benefit models
 - Hypothetical example: Build a sidewalk and 300 people who live within 200 yards of location will walk an average of 15 extra minutes per day

Minutes of Walking To and From Public Transit Per Day



Data from National Household Travel Survey, 2001, USDOT
N= 3312 transit users

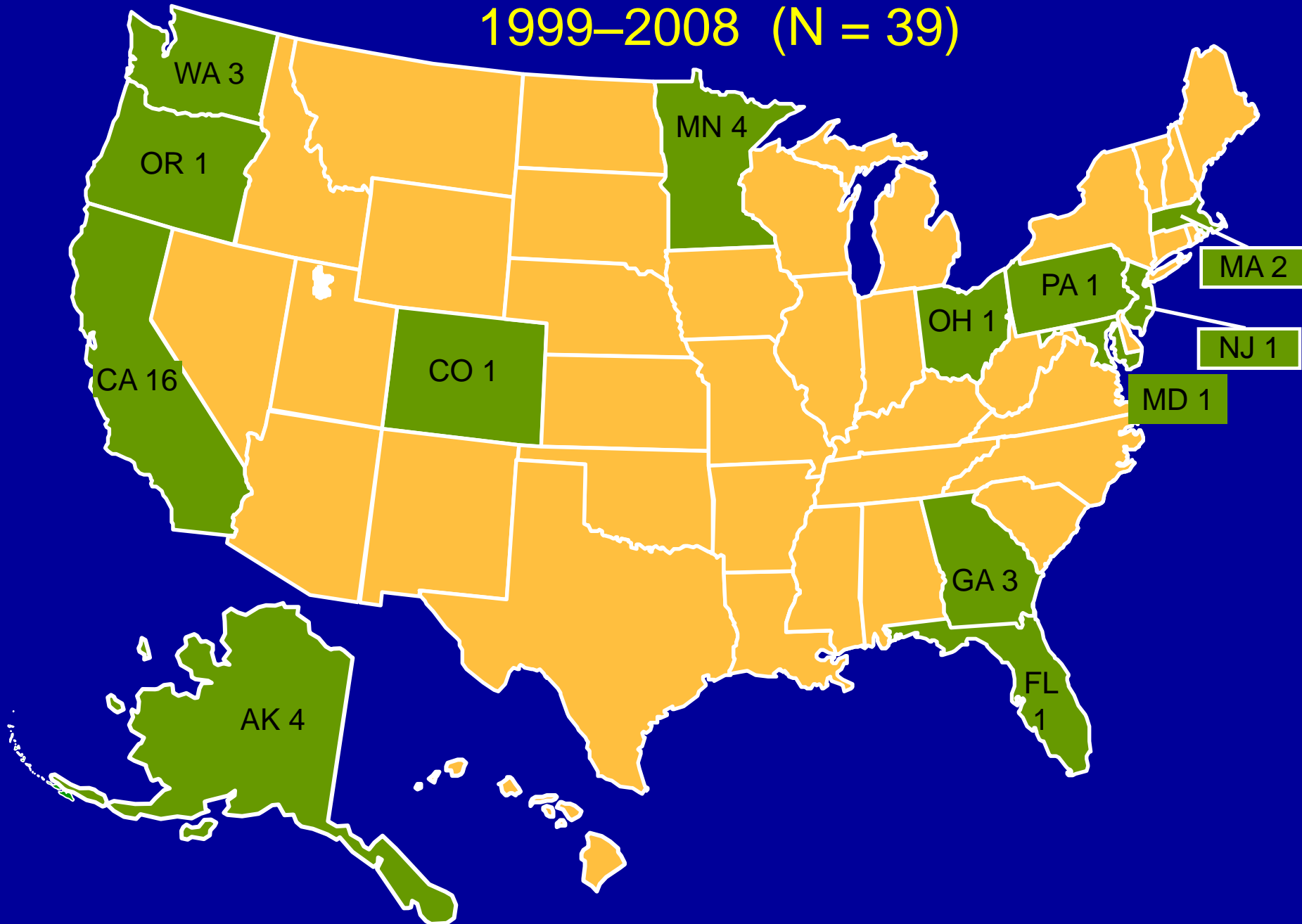
Besser LM, Dannenberg AL
Amer J Prev Med 29:273, 2005



Community Involvement in Conducting an HIA

- Increases community buy-in to project
- Helps identify social issues as well as health issues
- Routinely used in EIA process
- Commonly used in HIAs in Europe
- May add to time and resources needed to conduct HIA

Completed HIAs in the United States 1999–2008 (N = 39)



HIAs of Projects and Policies

- 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 policy
- Coal-fired power plant
- Low income home energy subsidies
- Oil and gas leasing policies

Decision-Making Organization for Project or Policy (n=39)

City council; planning commission	N=26
State government	N= 7
US federal agency	N= 3
US Congress	N= 1
Non-profit organization	N= 1
Local cooperative	N= 1

Selected Results in HIAs in U.S.

- Most identified improvements needed to mitigate adverse health impacts
 - Redevelopment projects that lacked affordable housing; rental voucher program
- A few encouraged projects or policies that would be health-promoting as designed
 - Walk-to-school program; Beltline transit project
- One concluded that proposed program would fail to reach its intended target population
 - After-school programs

Impact of HIA on Subsequent Decisions in HIAs in U.S.

- Documentable impacts were evident for some HIAs
 - Plan improvements to increase pedestrian safety
 - Change in redevelopment plans to provide 1:1 housing replacement for affected families
 - Noise mitigation measures required
 - Living wage ordinance adopted
 - Urban road corridor plans improved
- Most HIAs raised awareness of health issues for some audiences

Health Impact Assessments can help guide community design choices to promote human health



www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces
www.ph.ucla.edu/hs/health-impact/