

Proposal for Capacity Building to Perform Health Impact Assessments Concerning Physical Activity and Access to Healthy Food

There is increasing acknowledgment that many health issues such as health disparities and preventive health care are profoundly influenced by factors outside the traditional realm of health and health care. Factors such as poverty, employment, crime, transportation and poor access to healthy foods contribute to disparities in life expectancy as well as to health-related quality of life. Concerns about how to address these factors have led to a focus on “health in all policies,” in which policies in non-traditional sectors such as transportation, economic development, housing, employment, and agriculture ideally would contribute to health and health equity.

Health impact assessment (HIA) is a combination of methods to systematically examine the potential health effects of proposed policies, programs, and projects, providing decision-makers with information on potential health benefits and harms, disparities in the distribution of impacts, and alternatives for improving the ratio of benefit to harm. By providing a tool for guiding policymaking and implementation, HIA aims to improve the public’s health, equity, and sustainability. It is particularly useful for highlighting the health impacts of proposed policies outside the health sector such as land use, housing and transportation projects to labor, education and economic policies where potential health impacts may be under-recognized or poorly understood.

In order to enable professionals to inject health considerations into non-health sector decisions, HIA training will be provided to health department employees. The training will be in three phases: Basic HIA 101 (webinar); Advanced HIA 102 (on-site two day hands on training) and Implementation HIA 103 (wherein partners come together and begin an HIA). The training will be free to health department personnel and partners. HIA capacity training will be conducted by Healthiest Weight Florida staff and focuses on HIA methodology, applications, and tools. The Basic HIA 101 webinar will be available on two dates prior to the two-day Advanced HIA Face-to-Face training. Applicants for the Advanced HIA training must have completed the Basic class prior to attendance. Once the Advanced training is completed, it is anticipated that employees will form workgroups to actually conduct an HIA that would begin with the Implementation HIA class.

Basic HIA 101: (two hour webinar)

Learning objectives:

1. Define health impact assessment and why health impact assessment is an important tool to assess physical activity and access to healthy food
2. When and why it is used
3. Phases of the process

Outcomes:

1. Attendees will have a basic understanding of the concepts and values of HIA
2. Attendees will be able to communicate the use of HIA in the local context
3. Attendees will become familiar with possible health outcomes associated with lack of access to physical activity and healthy food

In order to be eligible for Tier Two training, Tier One is required.

Advanced HIA 102 (two day on-site training)

Learning Objectives:

1. Attendees will learn the background and history of HIA
2. Attendees will practice, using a case study, each phase of the HIA process
3. Attendees will gain capacity to conduct an HIA in their community