



Health and Equity Policy Analysis (HEPA) Project

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The Health and Equity Policy Analysis (HEPA) Project is comprised of a process and a tool to assess the health and equity impacts of proposed public policies. The goal is to facilitate proactive, thorough and objective decision making.

More specifically, HEPA will help policy decision makers:

- Analyze health and equity impacts of policy alternatives in a deliberate, proactive and thorough manner using a comprehensive set of domains and factors;
- Identify when there is insufficient data or information on potential impacts and thus the need to conduct additional research, perhaps using a Health Impact Assessment (HIA);
- Identify needed modification of policies;
- Prompt mitigation of negative impacts;
- Select preferred policy options;
- Provide a mechanism to establish agency policy priorities; and
- Evaluate implemented policies.

HEPA is based on the premise that good health is fundamental for a strong economy and vibrant society, and that health outcomes are largely influenced by the social, physical and economic conditions in which we live, work and play. These 'social determinants of health' are shaped primarily by decisions outside of the health sector. Thus, in order to improve the health of all people, health and equity considerations need to be incorporated into decision-making across all sectors and policy areas. The goal of the HEPA project is to inform decision makers about the health and equity consequences of policy options prior to policy implementation.

The HEPA tool provides the framework for analysis of health and equity impacts. Each policy is assessed against numerous factors representing aspects of the social determinants of health, grouped into Domains that reflect our local community indicator set—Community Indicators Initiative of Spokane County. The domains are: health, housing,

education, transportation, environment, economic vitality, arts and culture, community well-being and public safety. Health and equity impacts for each factor are identified separately as negative, neutral or positive. Factors are highlighted in cases where the impacts are uncertain or where additional information is needed.

ENVIRONMENT		Health Issues Score	Equity Score	Community/Population Affected
Public Health	What is the effect of the policy on public health issues, such as, smoking?	2	2	
Water Quality	What is the effect of the policy on water quality issues, such as, water?	2	2	
Industry/Construction	What is the effect of the policy on industry/construction issues?	2	2	Workers in areas of new development and
Residential Energy	What is the effect of the policy on the energy use/residential energy?	2	2	
Waste	What is the effect of the policy on waste management issues?	2	2	
HEALTH		Health Issues Score	Equity Score	Community/Population Affected
Life Expectancy	What is the effect of the policy on life expectancy?	2	2	
Health Status	What is the effect of the policy on health status?	2	2	
Healthcare Access	What is the effect of the policy on healthcare access?	2	2	
Injury and Violence	What is the effect of the policy on incidents of injury and violence?	2	2	
Healthcare Quality	What is the effect of the policy on healthcare quality?	2	2	
Health Disparities	What is the effect of the policy on health disparities?	2	2	
Environmental Health	What is the effect of the policy on environmental health issues?	2	2	
Health Care Quality	What is the effect of the policy on the quality of health care?	2	2	
Health Care Access	What is the effect of the policy on health care access?	2	2	
Health Care Quality	What is the effect of the policy on the cost of health care?	2	2	
Health System	What is the effect of the policy on the overall health system?	2	2	

A sample view of the HEPA tool.

After completing the initial analysis, all negative impacts can be specifically assessed and consideration made as to modifying the policy or planning for mitigation should it be adopted. A conscious decision can also be made whether any negative impacts are acceptable. The factors for which the impacts are not known can also be further assessed and a decision made about whether additional research or perhaps a Health Impact Assessment is necessary.

A team approach to using the HEPA tool is recommended to facilitate objective analysis and eliminate potential bias of a policy proponent.

A beta version of the tool has been developed and pilot tested internally by Spokane Regional Health District (SRHD). SRHD will create a version of the HEPA tool that is accessible to external partners to facilitate their policy analysis work. In the meantime, SRHD is interested in continuing to use the tool on real-world policies and engaging partners as a way to make them familiar with the tool, while also refining it based on partner input.



SRHD Policy Process: High-Level Conceptual Flow
 Health and Equity Policy Analysis (HEPA) Tool Quality Management Project
 Version 4.0
 05-27-2014

Legend: Blue boxes define the boundaries/scope of the HEPA project. Orange outline identifies where the policy screening tool could be used.

