

Health Impact Assessments

A practical tool to facilitate health-informed
public policy

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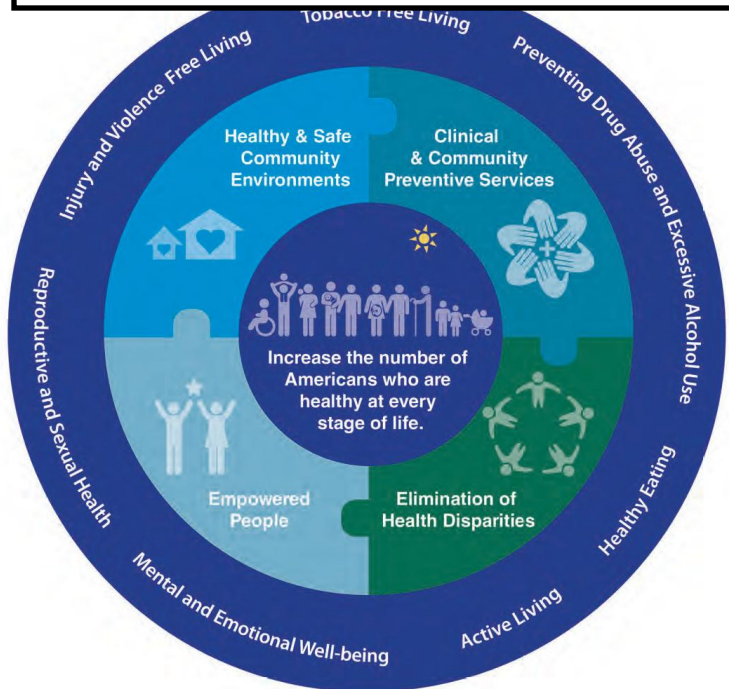
www.healthimpactproject.org

A collaboration between Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and The Pew Charitable Trusts.

Public health: Navigating toward a new approach

“Public health agencies alone cannot assure the nation’s health”

Institute of Medicine, 2002. The Future of the Public’s Health in the 21st Century



“Integrate health criteria into decision making across multiple sectors”
National Prevention Strategy, 2012

Collaborating across sectors

How do I do my job differently tomorrow?

- *No common language:*
 - Policymakers in other sectors such as transportation and housing may not understand health data.
 - public health professionals don't understand the constraints and limitations of the planning process
- *No funding*
- *Few formalized requirements*
- *Priorities don't necessarily match:*

Public health is one consideration of many; transportation decisions involve many other considerations (moving people, funding, technical limitations, local politics, etc)

HIA Examples:

Integrating health into environmental impact statements (EIS)

Bureau of Land Management proposed expansion of oil leasing in Alaska's North Slope in a culturally important area, necessitating an EIS



- Local government (which favors development in general) opposed plan.
- Became a “cooperating agency” In this role, the local health department drafted an HIA
- The BLM incorporated the HIA into the EIS

Health Determinants included in the HIA

- Food Security/Diet
- Air quality
- Water quality
- Noise
- Influx of nonresident workers
- Alcohol/Drug trafficking
- Revenues
- Employment and Income



Result of the NPR-A HIA/EIS?

- ❑ Changes in the final adopted leasing plan, protecting key harvest areas
- ❑ Mitigation measures: protect hunting and fishing, monitor for contaminants in local game, orient workers to the culture.
- ❑ Strong collaboration between the tribes and the agency; as second HIA/EIS was recently completed, with additional health mitigation measures.
- ❑ Contributed to a plan that was widely accepted: *no litigation*
- ❑ Alaska DHSS now does HIAs for ALL large projects in Alaska.

Health Impact Assessment: National Research Council definition

“A systematic process that uses an array of data sources and analytic methods and considers input from stakeholders to determine the potential effects of a proposed policy, plan, program or project on the health of a population and the distribution of those effects within the population. Health impact assessment provides recommendations on monitoring and managing those effects.”

National Research Council, 2011

IMPROVING
HEALTH
IN THE
UNITED STATES

The Role of
Health Impact Assessment

Committee on Health Impact Assessment

Board on Environmental Studies and Toxicology

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Massachusetts low income housing energy assistance program

Policy Question: energy prices spiked after Katrina—hardship for low-income families: should legislature increase LIHEAP funds?

Health Effects:

- Pneumonia
- Burns
- CO poisoning
- Hunger and poor nutrition



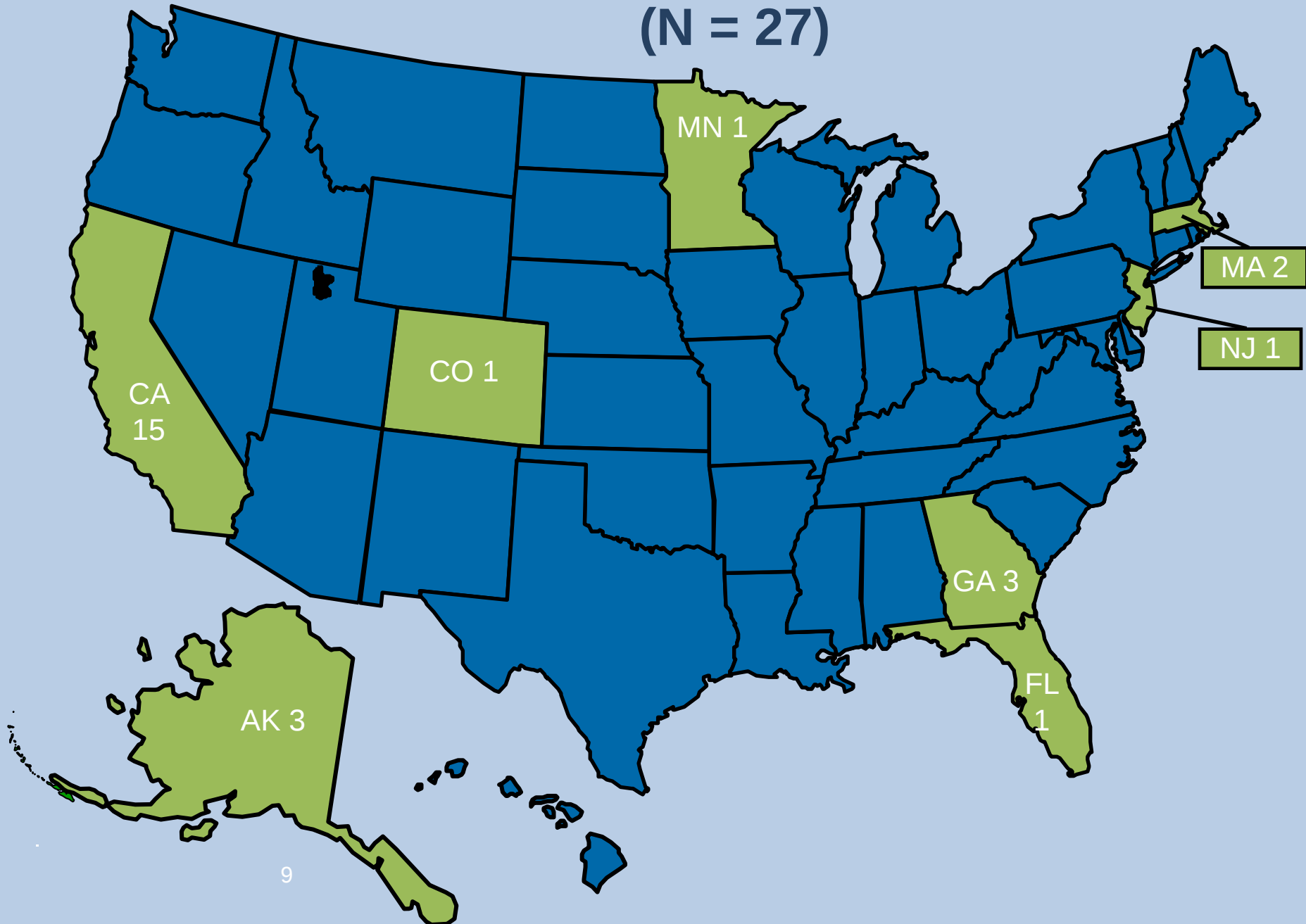
implications for Medicaid expenditures

Recommendations and Outcomes:

- Increased funding for LIHEAP—state controller noted the importance of the bill to public health in the evaluation of fiscal impacts
- New evaluation parameters to ensure adequate data on outcomes of program

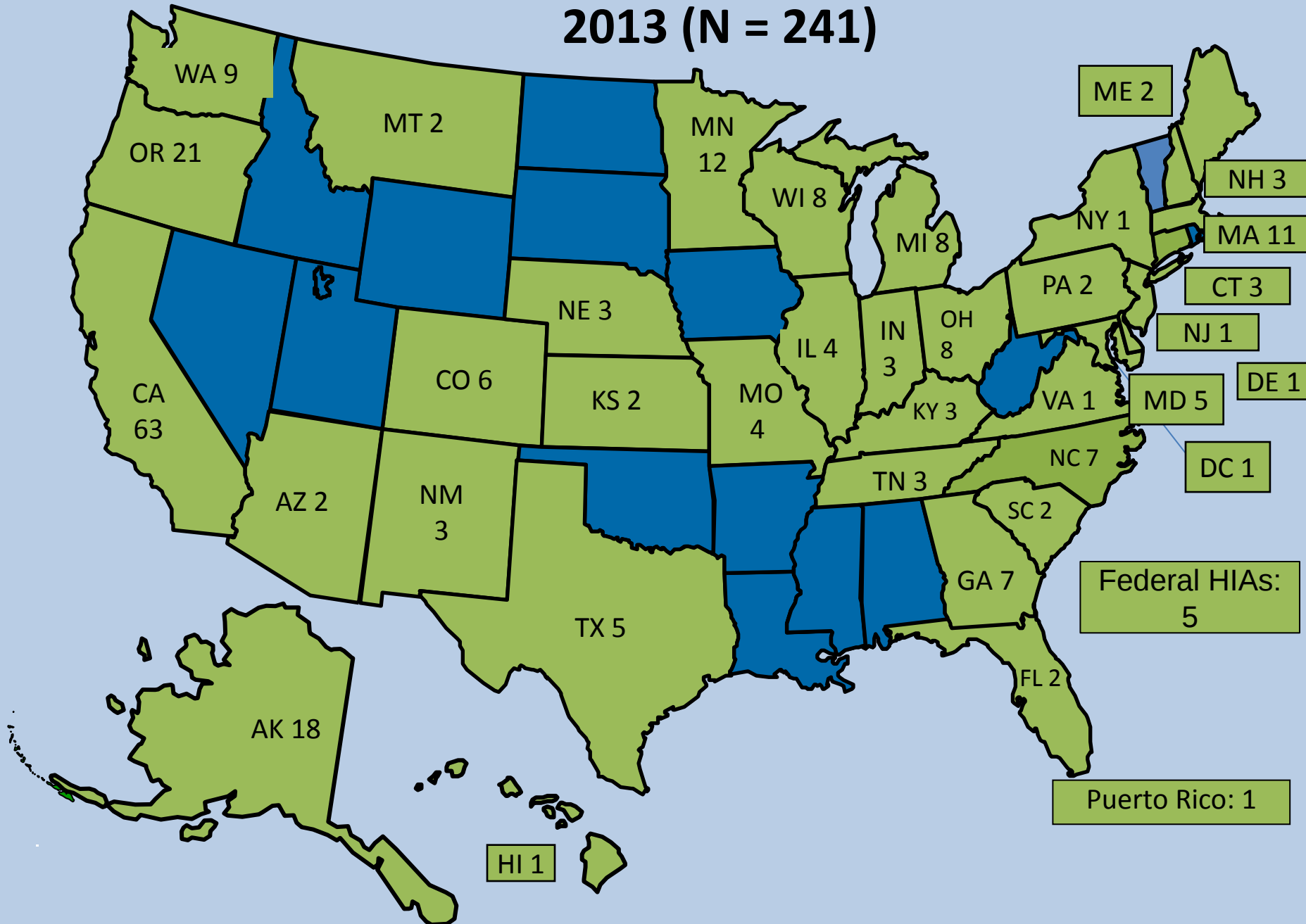
Completed HIAs 2007

(N = 27)



Completed and In Progress HIAs

2013 (N = 241)



USDA Rulemaking

Competitive foods in schools

Decision: *Healthy, Hunger-free Kids Act required USDA to regulate snack foods and beverages sold in schools*

Findings:

- *Less student access, purchase, and consumption of unhealthy foods and beverages*
- *Improved nutrition because of increased participation in school meal programs*
- *District decline in revenues for other programs NOT likely*

Outcome:

USDA relied on data from the HIA in the regulation, and cited the HIA heavily in reaching its final decision

Topics of HIAs:

A wide range

Social Policies—education, economy, employment

- Legislation for alternatives to incarceration—WI
- State school integration policy—MN
- SNAP (food stamps) reauthorization—U.S. Congress

Land Use, Transportation, housing

- Comprehensive plans, zoning, neighborhood revitalization
- Transit corridors, Transit-oriented development, highway upgrades
- Green space, bike routes
- Housing inspection

Energy, natural resources

- Hard rock mining, oil and gas development, power plants

Summary:

What are HIAs achieving?

- 1. Concrete policy changes that benefit health**
- 2. Systems changes**
 - *New partnerships and routine collaboration between health and other agencies*
 - *Federal permitting agencies will now include health experts on future EISs for oil and gas development*
 - *Community groups informed, engaged, empowered, and building new partnerships*
 - *Health-based standards now routinely incorporated in city's planning decisions – “we don't do too much HIA anymore”*

Challenge 2: time and workload

Who has time for an HIA??

If we want other sectors to think about health, we need to make it simple to do so!

HIAs are helping develop more streamlined tools to make health a routine part of decisions:

- Rapid, health-focused legislative analysis
- Incorporating health modules into planning and design tools.
- Incorporating health into federal/state funding criteria, incentives

Challenge 3:

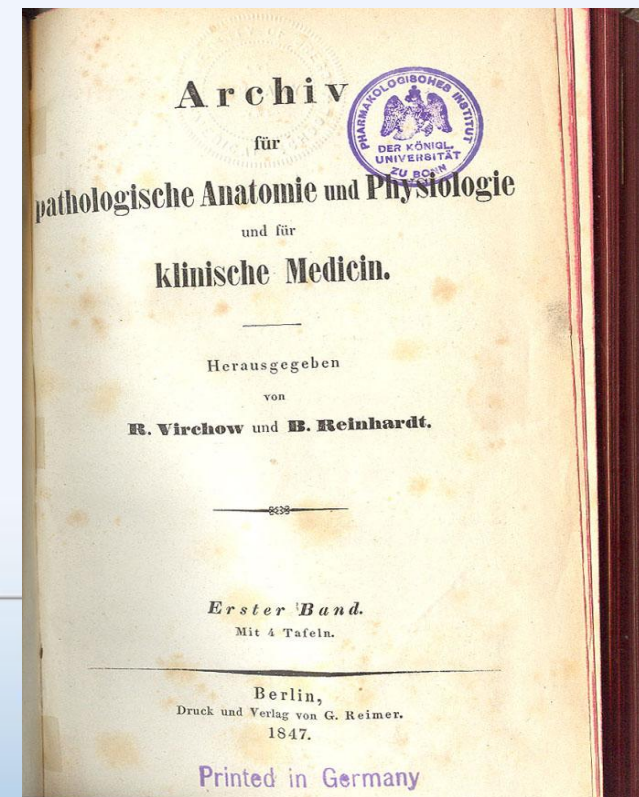
Cultural values

Typhus epidemic of Upper Silesia (1847):

Typhus didn't act alone: poverty, poor education, abysmal housing, and poor nutrition were the actual cause....

The cure?

Long-term planning, inter-agency council, free education, reform of the tax system to alleviate poverty, improve economic development.



Thank you!

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