



Health Impact Assessment (HIA) – A Potential Tool for State Policymaking

Keshia Pollack, PhD, MPH

Associate Professor, Department of Health Policy & Management

Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

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Maryland Environmental Health Network

What is Health?



Genetics (5%), Personal Behaviors (30%), Health Care (10%), Social and Environmental Conditions (55%)

World Health Organization, Commission on the Social Determinants of Health (2008)



The “Problem”

Policy, program, and project decisions made in sectors that do not consider health as their primary mission, generally do not consider the potential effects on human health, often resulting in unintended negative consequences.

Health Impact Assessment (HIA)

•“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. HIA provides recommendations on monitoring and managing those effects.” – *National Academies 2011*

Bottom line:

Practical way to collaborate across sectors and agencies, and translate public health research into predictions and reasonable recommendations that decision-makers can use

HIA Addresses Determinants of Health

How does the proposed project, plan, policy



and lead to health outcomes



HIA Examples

- HIA can be applied to a wide range of sectors
 - **Energy:** state legislature's decision on funding for the Low Income Housing Energy Assistance Program
 - **Agriculture:** statewide farm-to-school legislation
 - **Built environment:** HIA of the city's proposed zoning changes
- HIA can be applied to policy, project, program
 - **Policy:** Proposed changes to SNAP
 - **Project:** Senior housing redevelopment in California
 - **Program:** Zero tolerance program



Scope of HIA

Three levels

- Rapid/ “desktop”
- Intermediate
- Comprehensive



The Value of Doing a HIA

- Involves a **broad-range of impacted people** (community capacity building/empowerment)
- It's an effective tool for **meaningful cross-sector collaboration**
- Identifies harms & benefits **before decisions are made** (proactive versus reactive)
- Identifies **evidence-based strategies** to promote health & prevent disease.
- Increase **transparency**, support inclusiveness, democracy, and **community engagement** in the policy decision-making process

The HIA Process

1. Screening – do we need to conduct a HIA
2. Scoping – determine the important health effects, affected populations, available evidence, etc
3. Assessment – analyze baseline conditions and likely health effects
4. Recommendations – develop health-based recommendation and a feasible plan for implementing them
5. Reporting – disseminate the report to the public, stakeholders, solicit input
6. Monitoring – track outcomes of a decision and its implementation
7. Evaluation - of the process and impacts

Stakeholder Engagement: This makes HIA different from other assessments

- Participatory process
- Brings public health professionals, community stakeholders, planners, developers, and policymakers to the table with a focus on practical, realistic solution
- Can ensure a more democratic and transparent decision-making process
- Stakeholder engagement at each of the HIA steps
- Variety of strategies



To Recap...

- HIA adds the most value when health is not already the main point of the policy, program, or project under consideration
- Selective application of HIA is important: it should provide new, actionable information, and not become another needless layer of permitting/evaluation bureaucracy
 - HIA are not necessary for all proposed projects and policies!
- Best for an active decision-making process (proactive not reactive)

The Health Impact Project

<http://www.healthimpactproject.org>

Who We Are:

- A collaboration of RWJF and Pew Charitable Trusts (2009)

Purpose:

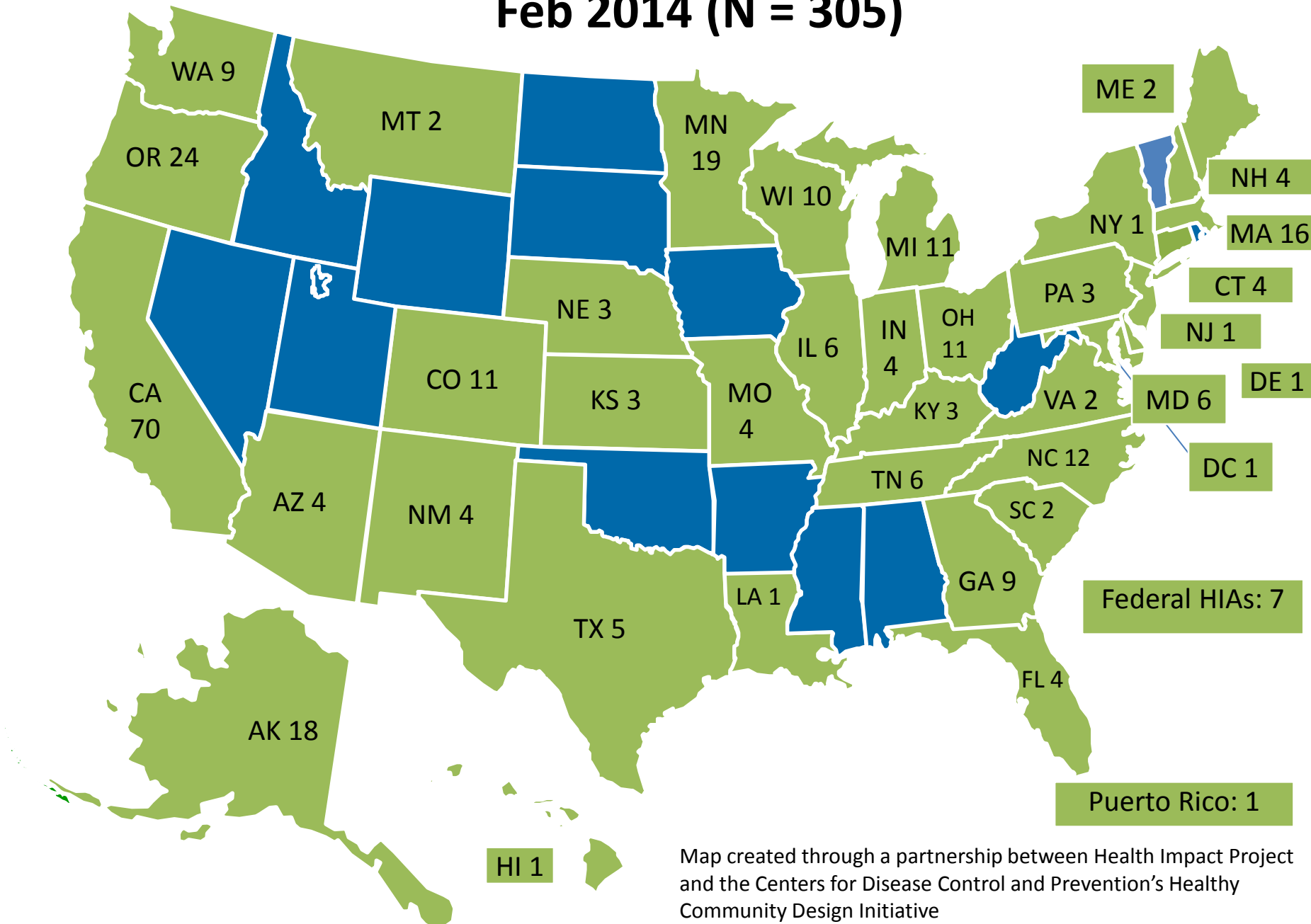
- Promote the use of HIA and build the field in the U.S.

How We Do It:

- Funding a series of demonstration projects; doing HIA ourselves
- Providing technical assistance to support new HIA practitioners
- Serving as neutral convener – connect people to resources
- Garnering lessons learned to identify potential levers for bringing health into the policy discussion

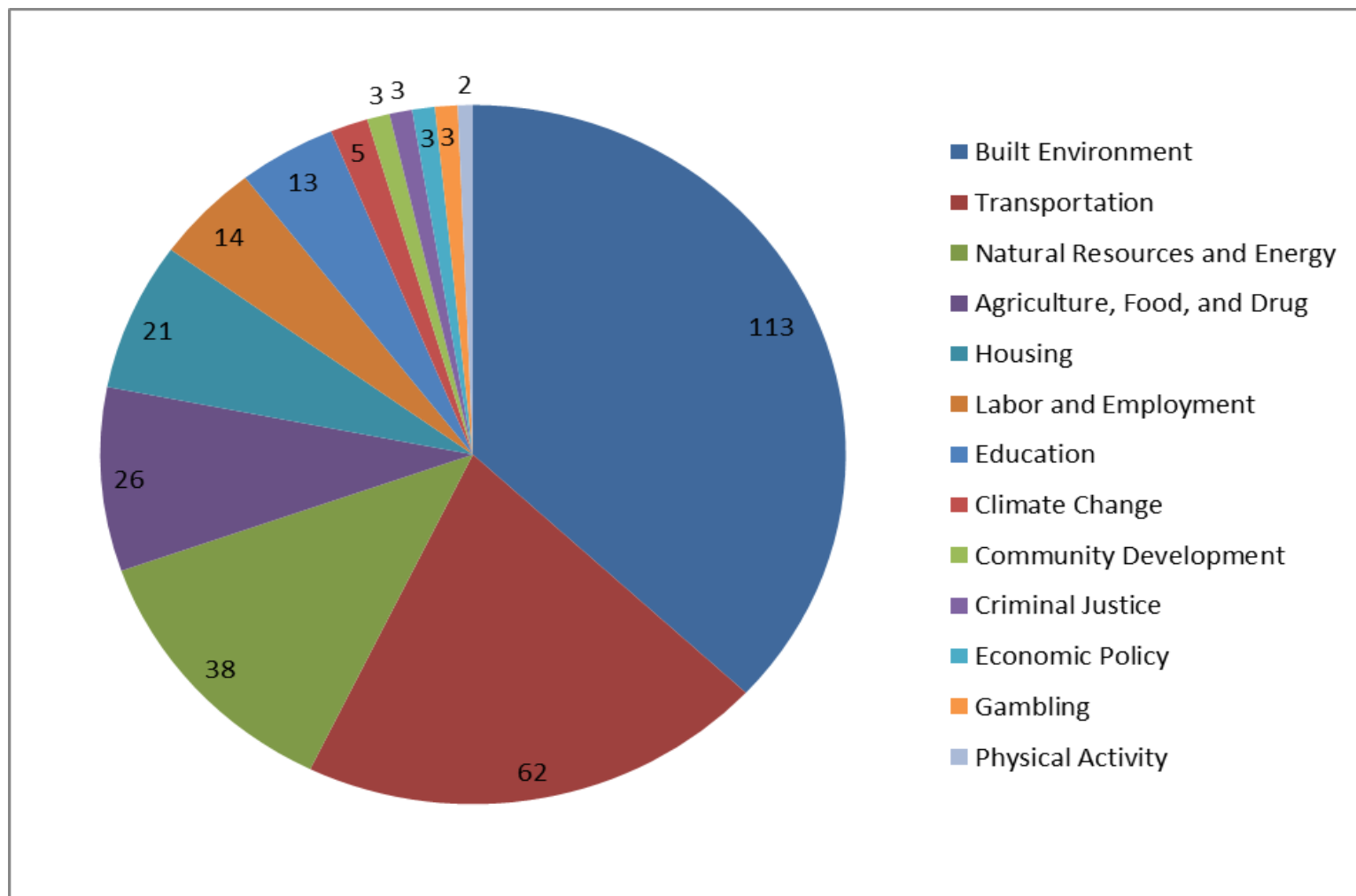
Completed and In Progress HIAs

Feb 2014 (N = 305)

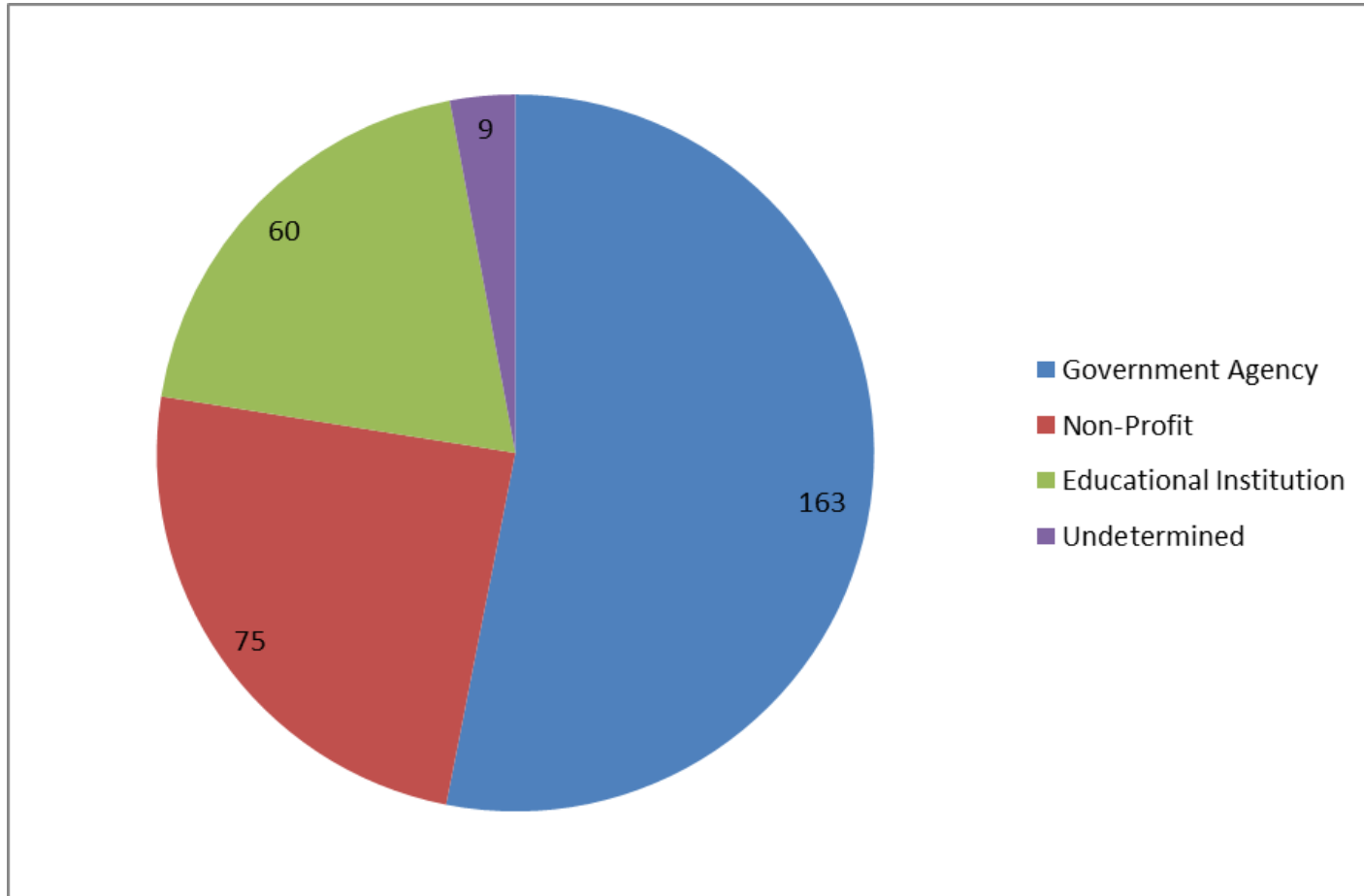


Map created through a partnership between Health Impact Project and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Healthy Community Design Initiative

What topics have HIAs addressed?



Who conducts HIAs?



Policy-focused HIA: Limited Application

- Several hypotheses are to why:
 - Policy is not a linear process – thus challenging
 - Overall belief that health is not deemed “sufficiently” important against other considerations in policymaking
 - Policymaking impacted by a range of complex interrelated factors, of which HIA is only one
 - Rhetoric of HIA interferes with policymaking
 - Unknown if HIA predictions produce trustworthy results
 - Logistics of doing the HIA – who, when, cost, etc.

Legal Review Concerning the Use of Health Impact Assessments in Non-Health Sectors



- Studied a sample of 36 jurisdictions in the U.S., and found that “existing laws offer many opportunities for health to be factored into a range of decisions, in which it typically would not otherwise be considered.”



Implementing HIA for Policymaking: Practical Considerations

- Who would do a HIA?
- Who would pay for it?
- Need to provide timely, valid information
- Need to engage stakeholders upfront, especially policymakers
- Respecting the policymaking process
- Need a champion
- Need public health experts to help with screening

How to Pay for It?

- It doesn't have to be a long, costly process
- Health is now the top budget item for states
 - Leveraging other public investments to improve health presents an important opportunity to reduce costs, both in the short term (e.g., injury, asthma) and the long term (e.g., obesity, diabetes)
- Does not have to be a new blanket requirement
 - Well-done screening dictates that HIA is used selectively, when the time and resources exist and when it will clearly add valuable new information that leads to a better decision



The Policy Landscape for HIA in the U.S.

- Executive branch initiatives that open the door to HIA
- Legislation to support or require HIA
- Using existing laws – e.g., NEPA
- Establishing standards and guidance to build recognition, comfort, and acceptance of HIA
- Capacity and funding
- Establishing sustainable cross-agency partnerships

State Legislation on HIA

- Washington S.B. 6099 (2007): State Route 520 Bridge Project (HIA of a specific project)
- Massachusetts S.B. 2087 (2009): Healthy Transportation Compact: “shall implement HIA...determine the effect of transportation projects on public health and vulnerable populations”
- Washington statute (2006) – Health impact reviews
 - Any state legislator or the governor may request a review of any proposal for a state legislative or budgetary change
 - Rapid assessments completed by the State Board of Health within 10 days after a request
 - Impacts on health and health disparities



Current Work: Health Scoring for Legislative Analysis

- Determine how to optimize HIA for application to legislative decisions at the state level
- “Scoring”
- Train and provide TA to legislative analysts to score health impacts of proposed legislation
- Completed about a dozen key informant interviews
- Established an Advisory Committee
- Next step: develop tool/process and pilot test and evaluate it in 2 states



Contact Information

Keshia Pollack, PhD, MPH

Department of Health Policy and Management

Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

410-502-6272

kpollac1@jhu.edu

Twitter: @DR_KMP