



Why You Need a Health Impact Assessment

Why do an HIA?

A health impact assessment (HIA) builds trust among the different people involved and increases acceptance of a proposal by the community and others affected by it.

An HIA:

- Identifies community concerns and generates a dialogue about how the proposal benefits the community
- Helps people affected understand the trade-offs between community health and wellbeing and other economic, environmental and social objectives
- Helps overcome community resistance, speed up approval process, and reduce costs
- Contributes to employee morale, project sustainability and the social licence to operate

What is an HIA?

An HIA evaluates a policy, procedure, process, program, project or other proposal. It identifies potential positive and negative impacts the proposal may have on a community, examines who is most likely to be affected (equity aspect), and makes recommendations that will enhance positive impacts and reduce negative ones.

An HIA can be done during proposal development (prospective) or used to assess the implementation of an existing initiative or concern (retrospective).

What does it involve?

There is no one approach to conducting an HIA. Many frameworks have been developed which identify the following stages:

1. **Screening:** An initial rapid review to decide if a health impact assessment is needed.
2. **Scoping:** A review of environmental, social and other factors that might have an impact on health and the selection of factors of most concern to be studied in more detail.
3. **Assessment:** A detailed assessment of the factors identified in the scoping phase.
4. **Reporting:** A report of the findings, including recommendations to reduce negative impacts and enhance positive ones.
5. **Monitoring and evaluation:** This involves an assessment of the HIA process itself as well as monitoring the implementation of the proposal and HIA recommendations over a longer term.

Assessments come in all sizes and degrees of complexity. For example:

1. **Desktop:** An assessment that is based on the available published literature. Typically, a desktop assessment will not include stakeholder or public engagement, though it may include an external review and/or key informant interviews.
2. **Rapid:** Done in a short period of time – usually less than a month – it can be a desktop assessment, a workshop that involves stakeholders and/or experts, or a mix of the two.
3. **In-depth or comprehensive:** Such assessments are usually only undertaken for major proposals or proposals that may have large unanticipated impacts on the community. They often involve collecting project-specific data, modelling, data analysis and include stakeholder and public engagement in the scoping, assessment and recommendation phases.
4. **Integrated:** An HIA that is part of an environmental assessment and provides a health lens or perspective on its findings.

Do you need to do an HIA?

If your answer to any of the questions below is yes, an HIA can be invaluable for identifying ways the proposal could be improved. This will increase community and stakeholder acceptance; help avoid unnecessary delays; and ease approval of the proposal.

- Will the proposal create a major change in the community?
- Has the community voiced concern about impacts of the proposal on their health?
- Is the proposal likely to have a disproportionate impact on a vulnerable population?
- Is there strong opposition to the proposal in the community?
- Are there divergent views in the community about the benefits of the proposal?
- Will the proposal require an environmental assessment or approval?
- Does the proposal include a new or unfamiliar technology or process?

How can I help you?

As an independent expert with extensive experience in public health, my experience includes:

- Nearly twenty years at Toronto Public Health promoting healthy urban environments, tackling climate change, and leading health impact assessments
- Promoting the environmentally sound management of chemicals in collaboration with United Nations agencies, governments and non-governmental organisations

I engage with stakeholders and decision-makers in a way that builds trust in the process and increases acceptance of the results and conclusion of the assessment among the people affected.

Call me to find out how an HIA could benefit you: **416-951-0850**.

Or send me an e-mail:

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