



Pilot Program to Help States and Localities Consider Health in Policymaking

HEALTH **IMPACT**
PROJECT

The Health Impact Project will launch a two-year pilot project in January 2018 to help lawmakers learn the potential health implications of proposed legislation and policies. The project will work with participating states and localities to create health notes: brief, nonpartisan summaries that will draw from the best available peer-reviewed research, scientific data, and public health expertise. The notes can be developed for a large number of bills within a short time frame, enabling their use during the legislative process.

Rigorous, rapid, and impartial analysis

Health notes will draw from an expedited review of research to identify the best evidence of how a proposed bill could affect health. They will describe both positive and negative effects—such as changes in asthma rates or physical activity—and explain how the measures could affect issues that strongly influence health, including education, employment, and housing. Health notes will also consider the context of the legislation and include available local data to illustrate its potential impacts on specific populations, locations, and programs. They are not intended to provide a cost-benefit analysis or to support or oppose legislation. Instead, the aim is to provide legislators with data to support decision-making. Each note will describe the evidence and categorize its strength.

How health notes can help

Evidence shows that decisions made in sectors outside public health and health care—such as education, housing, transportation, and criminal justice—can have profound and lasting effects on the factors that shape health and health outcomes. The goal of the health note is to help policymakers identify the potential and often-overlooked connections between these various sectors and health. Findings can also be used between legislative sessions to conduct more research on legislative topics. Finally, health notes can help the public to better understand how specific bills or amendments might protect, promote, or harm health.

Table 1

Potential Topics That a Health Note Might Examine

Policy area	Potential effects reviewed
Criminal justice	Educational attainment, youth and family poverty, behavioral health, skill development, healthy housing
Education	Job readiness, income, access to healthy housing and food, academic achievement
Human services	Access to health-promoting resources and services, effects of changes in program or eligibility requirements on factors important to health such as food security and access to housing, child care, or education
Transportation	Walkability, access to safe and affordable routes/services, pollution

How to participate

When invited by leadership, the project will work with policymakers to implement the pilot on a small number of bills during the 2018 and 2019 legislative sessions.

After a legislature initiates a request, the project will work with members of both parties to identify relevant topics, committees, and key stakeholders to engage, and to establish criteria for selecting bills to analyze. It will develop the health notes to demonstrate how they would work within the context of a given legislature and solicit feedback from lawmakers and other stakeholders about their value.

The project will initially cover all costs associated with the health note pilot. Project staff members will conduct the research, develop the notes, provide printed copies of completed ones, and evaluate the process. They will also post them online for the general public.

Assuming that the pilot is successful, the team will then work with policymakers to identify an appropriate and sustainable volume of health notes that could be completed annually. The project will also engage with policymakers to identify an entity—such as a state or local agency, nonprofit organization, or academic institution—to conduct future health notes and support these organizations as they create a sustainable structure and process.

For further information, please visit:

healthimpactproject.org

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The Health Impact Project is a national initiative designed to reduce health inequities and improve the health of all people by ensuring that health is a valued and routine consideration in decisions affecting them.