

POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT



AREA OF EXPERTISE FOCUS:



Review health disparities data (sources on pg 4) among different demographic groups, related to this area of expertise. Then use the discussion prompts and resources below to identify action steps to increase capacity in the intersect between this capability and area of expertise.

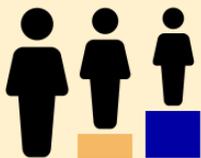
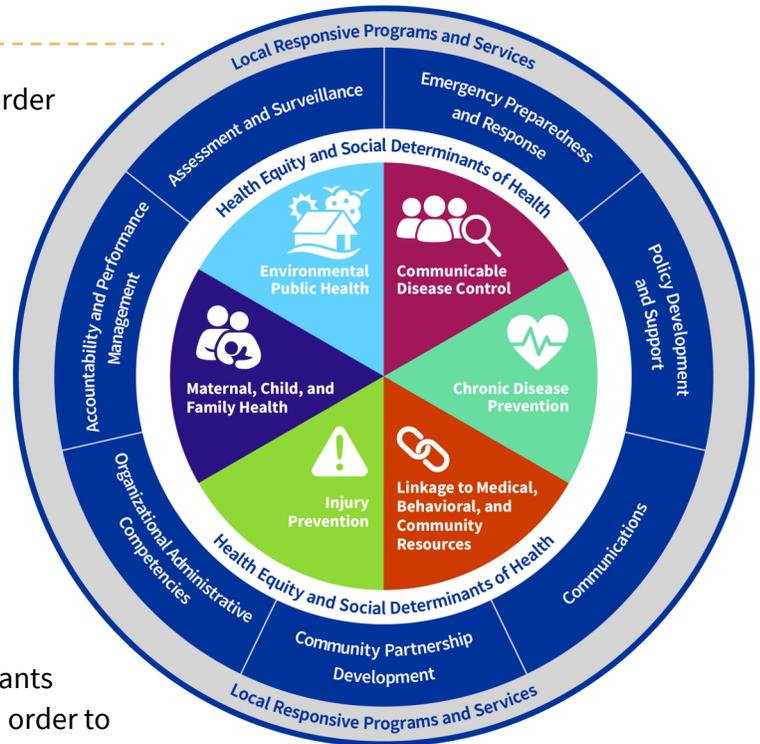
Policy development and support are critical in order to improve the physical, environmental, and social conditions that affect health. Public health agencies should have the capacity to effectively inform and influence policies under consideration by other Organizations, serving as an expert resource for establishing and maintaining policies that are evidence-based, legally defensible, and effective at improving well-being for everyone.

#HealthierMO recommends three steps in a process to increase public health professionals’ capacity to incorporate health equity into policy development.

Research: Review data to identify areas where policies are needed to address social determinants of health, health disparities, and root causes in order to improve health Identify and engage stakeholders in the process early.

Analysis: Identify potential policies and consider their plausibility, feasibility, and acceptability within the community. Consider ethical issues and potential unintended consequences. Determine who has the power to make policy change and identify any limitations.

Communication: Listen to input from stakeholders—anyone who has a “stake” in the issue. Engaging a diverse array of stakeholders and gathering their input will ensure equity in policy-making. Share public health expertise with other organizations on policy implications, potential unintended consequences, and public health impact. Work with trusted partners on advocacy, outreach, and education.



INFUSING HEALTH EQUITY

Achieving health equity should be a guiding priority, core value, and primary goal, central to every aspect of public health practice, as depicted in Missouri’s FPHS model. Public health agencies should use data to identify health disparities, determine root causes, and implement targeted interventions to advance health equity. They should engage the community to learn about challenges to healthy living and consider policies that will decrease health disparities and achieve a measurable impact for people at highest risk of poor health outcomes and for historically disengaged or disenfranchised populations.



RESEARCH

A policy is a written statement that is binding and enforceable, and is broadly applicable to a group of people or a space or location. Policy change starts by simply asking:

“Is change needed?”

“What change is needed?”

“Why is it needed?” and

“Who has the power and authority to make this change?”

At a foundational level, policy change will focus on improving health outcomes, especially among at-risk, vulnerable, or historically disengaged or disenfranchised populations. Health policy will have a more significant impact as it moves upstream to address social determinants of health, and even more impact as it addresses root causes and dismantles systems such as structural racism and institutional poverty.

Consider health and well-being gaps in your community, using data from your Community Health Assessment. Refer to the Assessment and Surveillance section of this workbook for more information and additional data sources. Then use the discussion prompts below to engage in conversation about how policies could address these gaps to improve community health and well-being.

[What is Policy?](#), ChangeLab Solutions

Read this fact sheet for a basic understanding of what policies are, why they are needed, and how they can improve community health and well-being.

1. What are the disparities our data disclose under this specific area of expertise? Who is affected and to what degree? Is there a disproportionate impact on one or more populations in our community?

2. Which social determinants of health may be contributing to this disparity? What are potential root causes? Which systems or institutions may be reinforcing this disparity?

ANALYSIS

Even though health and well-being are shared values, health inequities are often caused by policies developed outside of public health. Addressing health inequities and the social and environmental determinants of health are a shared responsibility among many sectors, yet not everyone has the power to implement policy change. Public health agencies should partner with community members and organizations to consider which policies would be effective, feasible, and acceptable in their community. Policies that improve daily living conditions and environmental factors for all community members should be a shared priority.

[Health in All Policies](#), ASTHO

This guide offers a framework for communicating with partners and integrating health considerations into policymaking across sectors.

[Community Health Rankings and Roadmaps](#), University of Wisconsin

Review the data to better understand factors in your community that impact how long and how well people live.

3. What are proposed policy solutions to address the gap(s) identified? Which of these policies are plausible and likely to be effective at addressing the identified gaps?

4. Are the proposed policies feasible? How well will they work in a real-world setting? What resources would be necessary to implement these policies? To what degree are resources available within the community? Where might additional resources be found?

Refer to the Community Partnership Development section of this workbook for guidance on how to build partnerships to achieve collective impact.

5. Who has the power to make policy change? What limitations might hinder policy implementation? What is the current climate in regards to policy change?



6. What are the health benefits of these policies? What are the costs? What unintended consequences might be created, especially for historically disengaged audiences or people at highest risk of poor health outcomes?

COMMUNICATION

Successful policies focus on a clear, compelling, and achievable goal, but must be informed by data and input from stakeholders and people who will be affected by the policy. Public health agencies are positioned to contribute to a “health in all policies” approach by providing data and insight on potential unintended consequences, ethical considerations, and public health impacts for any policy under consideration. Partnerships with trusted community members will also be vital to successful advocacy, outreach, and education on the policy.

7. Will these policies be acceptable to decision-makers, stakeholders, and the community members they will impact? How well do they align with the community’s priorities, values, and culture? How might we communicate policy value to these audiences?

Refer to the Communications section of this workbook for additional guidance on communication strategies and message development.

8. How might we foster a more inclusive process to seek input from the full range of community members who will be affected by policies?



Ashley Wegner, Clay County Public Health Center

“The future of public health is equity work. That means working on policies so there aren’t unintended consequences or negative impacts on populations already experiencing disparities. It also requires resources and a different way of doing business. Policy analysts are new positions within the public health field, which help us understand long-term impacts of local and state policies and then create a strategic plan to see how we can make more of an influence.”



9. What data, insight, and expertise might our agency contribute to cross-sector policy discussions in order to support a “health in all policies” approach?

[Empty yellow response box]

10. Which tools and training would increase our skills in policy development and support?

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TRAINING RESOURCES

[Public Health Policy and Advocacy](#), Heartland Center for Population Health and Community Systems Development

[Policy, Politics, and Collective Action](#), R Brownson, J Chriqui, K Stamatakis, 2009

NEXT STEPS

Utilize the tools below for more detailed guidance on how to improve a “health in all policies” approach and develop public-health specific policies.

[Getting Started with Policy Change](#), County Health Rankings and Roadmaps ([companion worksheet](#))

Use this learning guide to better understand the policy development process. Journal your thoughts using the companion worksheet online and linked above.

[Health in All Policies](#), ASTHO

This guide offers a framework for communicating with partners and integrating health considerations into policymaking across sectors.

[Choose Effective Policies and Programs](#), County Health Rankings and Roadmaps

Use this online tool to select proven policies that will fit your community.

Michelle Shikles, Columbia/Boone County Health Department

“We looked at communicable disease rates and leading causes of death rates by race and found a significant disparity. We developed a fitness and nutrition program based on models that had been specifically developed for the African-American community and had been tested and proven effective. The idea was that we take these health education programs and pair them with policy changes and environmental changes in our churches to have a true health promotion program that addressed policy, environmental changes, and education among participants.”



Spotlight

3 POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT: OUTCOMES AND ACTION STEPS

Included in the Potential Outcomes column below are the capacities required to fully assure this foundational capability. Refer to your Capacity Assessment Snapshot or Toolkit reports to review your agency’s most recent self-assessment findings. Then use the table below to identify action steps you will take to close gaps and achieve full capacity to assure the FPHS model in your community. Edit the table or use your own planning tool to prioritize next steps. Refer back to tools provided in this workbook to support action steps.

Potential Outcome	Action Steps	Timeline	Resources	Assigned To
We develop evidence-based and legally feasible public health policy recommendations for legislative decision-makers				
We include the needs of vulnerable populations within recommendations for public health policies				
We research, analyze, cost out, and articulate the impact of public health policy recommendations				
We organize support for public health policy recommendations and place them before an entity with the legal authority to adopt them				
We work with partners and policymakers to enact policies that are evidence-based and that address the social determinants of health				

RESOURCES

[Fillable Logic Model template](#)

[Sustainability Tool](#), Brown School at Washington University, St Louis

Take 15 minutes to evaluate your proposed activity across eight domains in order to gauge its capacity for sustainability. Registration is required to use this free tool.