



NEW MEXICO HEALTH EQUITY PARTNERSHIP

NMHEP MISSION: WHAT IS OUR PURPOSE?

The purpose of the New Mexico Health Equity Partnership (HEP), an initiative at the Santa Fe Community Foundation, is to strengthen the capacity of New Mexico communities to shift power relations through advocating for systems and policy change that will improve the conditions where children, families, and communities are healthy. This requires addressing structural and institutionalized inequities based on race, class, gender and geography.

NMHEP: WHAT DO WE CARE ABOUT?

Every New Mexican should have the opportunity to lead a healthy life, to live in neighborhoods where our children and families can thrive and to be able to have a say in the decisions that impact their communities and their lives.

WHAT DO WE DO?

HEP focuses on building the organizational and community infrastructure necessary to improve the living conditions in our communities. We do this by connecting people, community groups and decision makers as well as each other as they are more powerful as a collective than as individuals. We build infrastructure through trainings, coaching and by sharing tools that allow both residents and community groups to hold policymakers accountable. We help elevate the community's voice so residents can drive change.

HOW WE DO IT?

We train residents and community groups on how to make a more compelling case with greater impact when engaging policymakers on issues they care most about. One critical tool that we provide and teach is the **Health Impact Assessment (HIA)**. Through the HIA, advocates and residents learn how to collect and utilize data that can drive and influence policy change, and hold decision makers more accountable. The HIA is an effective means in empowering and giving voice to community members. HIA has produced the following results:

- It builds leadership. Community members learn how to navigate the political system. They become more knowledgeable about decision making processes, and they become more comfortable with speaking before decision makers.
- It commands attention from decision makers and leads to the adoption of community recommendations.
- It fosters communication and collaboration among disparate groups that previously did not have good relationships.

A forthcoming report, by New Stories to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, highlights HIA as a best practice. The HEP members are noted as STARS as communities coming together to inform policies to improve health via HIA. The report notes that what is particularly relevant in New Mexico is that HIAs are being used by enough people in enough communities that they are creating a common vocabulary for action and learning.

HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT: PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

- **Democracy** – Involve and engage the public, inform and influence decision-makers
- **Equity** – Consider distribution of health impacts, center community members most impacted in leadership roles, and recommend ways to improve proposed decisions for affected groups
- **Sustainable Development** – Judge short- and long-term impacts of a proposal

- **Ethical Use of Evidence** – Use evidence to judge impacts and inform recommendations, not set to support or refute a proposal; be rigorous and transparent
- **Comprehensive Approach to Health** – Be guided by the wider social determinants of health.

HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT STEPS

- **Screening** involves determining whether a HIA is feasible, timely, and would add value to the decision-making process.
- **Scoping** creates a plan and timeline for conducting a HIA that defines priority issues, research questions and methods, and participant roles.
- **Assessment** occurs in two steps:
 - Creating an Existing Conditions Profile for a geographic area and/or population in order to understand baseline conditions and to be able to predict change.
 - Evaluating Potential Health Impacts, including the magnitude and direction of impacts, using quantitative and qualitative research methods and data.
- **Recommendations** are then developed to improve the project, plan, or policy and/or to mitigate any negative health impacts.
- **Reporting** occurs in two steps:
 - Creating written or visual presentation of the HIA results can take many forms including written reports, power point presentations, and comment letters.
 - Communicating the results within the decision-making process. A communications plan can include media outreach and public testimony.
- **Monitoring** tracks the impacts of the HIA on the decision-making process and the decision, the implementation of the decision, and the impacts of the decision on health determinants.

INTERESTED IN HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT?

Questions to begin exploring

What is the proposed policy the health impact assessment will inform? When will the decision about the proposed policy be made? Who are the decision makers?

What health determinants are connected to the proposed policy? How are the health determinants connected to childhood (0-8) health outcomes?

What momentum is there around this issue? Which communities and organizations have helped to fuel that momentum?

Who are the key partners that will conduct and develop the HIA and move it along? How will community members most impacted by the issue hold leadership roles throughout the process? What community organizing and policy/advocacy groups will be engaged and how? What role might health councils/organizations or academic institutions play in the process?

