The New Jersey Health Impact Collaborative (NJHIC) promotes the consideration of public health impacts into decisions about projects and policies. NJHIC is a forum that advances Health Impact Assessment (HIA) as a tool to improve planning and decision-making throughout New Jersey.

NJHIC is an initiative of Rutgers University’s Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy in collaboration with Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences (RBHS). NJHIC builds partnerships to conduct Health Impact Assessments (HIA) that influence state, regional and local decisions that result in healthier communities and citizens.

The Collaborative advances strategies that promote health in all policies through:
- Undertaking Health Impact Assessment (HIA) projects to illustrate benefits, inform specific decision-making and to educate policy makers;
- Conducting outreach and education to practitioners and decision-makers about the value of HIA through conferences, briefings, workshops, and websites;
- Developing and delivering training and education to practitioners through coursework, studio classes, trainings and professional development opportunities;
- Developing a community of HIA practitioners in New Jersey to ensure performance of HIA and to facilitate best practices and information sharing;
- Building partnerships and networks among decision-makers, state and local agencies, public health professionals and practitioners;
- Conducting policy analyses to identify opportunities for integration of HIA into policy development and decision-making throughout New Jersey;
- Facilitating research and collection of data to improve standards of HIA practice in New Jersey.

Sources:
Rutgers University, 2015.

New Jersey faces unique challenges that could benefit from HIA efforts:

- **1,195**
  - There are a lot of us.
  - New Jersey is the most densely populated state in the U.S. with 1,195 people per square mile.

- **50%+**
  - Income spent on housing.
  - 31% of low and moderate income families in NJ spend more than half of their income on housing costs.

- **74 billion**
  - We drive everywhere.
  - The number of vehicle miles traveled on NJ roads was 74 billion.

- **1/4**
  - Childhood obesity.
  - Nearly 1 out of 4 children ages 10-17 are overweight or obese in New Jersey.

- **325,000**
  - Unsustainable land use patterns.
  - The state saw an increase of almost 325,000 acres of development during the 21-year period between 1986-2007 (40 acres/day).

- **350**
  - Toxic challenges.
  - New Jersey has more than 16,000 contaminated industrial sites. More than 350 facilities report under the federal Toxic Release Inventory.

- **$70 billion**
  - Aging infrastructure.
  - A 2013 report estimates that New Jersey’s aging infrastructure requires $70 billion to address deferred maintenance and to ensure resilience.

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Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is a fast-growing practice in the U.S. that provides practitioners and policymakers with a tool to consider health outcomes in decisions that may not traditionally be health-related. Combining scientific data, health expertise and public input, HIA offers a systematic approach to identify and assess the potential positive and negative health effects of decisions related to policies, programs or projects.

HIAs in the U.S. have been applied to decision-making in sectors including land use, energy, transportation, housing and economics. By using HIA to consider and address health impacts early in the decision-making process, HIA efforts in the U.S. have led to improved health outcomes.

In general, HIA follows a 6-step method which can be accomplished fairly quickly (e.g. “rapid” HIA) or through a more comprehensive process with extensive stakeholder engagement, collection of data and consultation. HIA provides a practical and applied approach to the decision-making process by:

- Considering health outcomes in decision-making such as social, economic and environmental influences;
- Convening diverse members of the public to elicit multiple perspectives and input;
- Identifying groups of people who might be particularly vulnerable to health impacts; and
- Reviewing potential strategies that may reduce negative health impacts and increase positive impacts.

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