

# Policy Change 101

Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention  
Practitioners Institute

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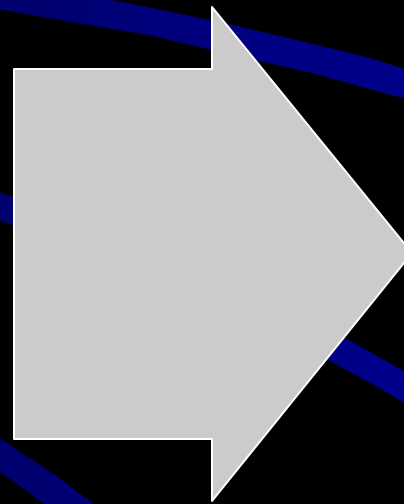
# Definition of Policy

ASTDHPPHE definition:

*Policies are defined as laws, regulations, and rules, both formal and informal.*

# Social Ecological Framework

- ◆ Individual factors
- ◆ Peer factors
- ◆ Institutional factors
- ◆ Community factors
- ◆ Public policy



**“Environmental  
Change”**

# Policies are found at multiple levels

- ◆ Institutions/ organizations, e.g., worksites, hospitals, schools
- ◆ Communities, e.g., cities/towns; groups based on interest or identity
- ◆ Public policy, e.g., state and federal

# Policies: Examples

- State or local laws/regulations that restrict smoking (workplaces, public buildings, restaurants)
- Worksite rules that provide time off during work hours for physical activity
- Health care setting policy to screen all patients for high blood pressure
- State or local laws limiting youth access to tobacco (e.g., penalties for sales to minors)
- Worksite policy requiring healthy snacks at meetings

# Importance of “Enforcement”

- Policies are ineffective without enforcement or follow-through
- Unenforced policies might be worse than no policies at all
- Example enforcement measures:
  - compliance checks on tobacco sales to minors
  - if an employee brings donuts to a meeting, someone reminds them of the healthy food policy
- From DUI literature: sanctions should be swift, certain, and not unreasonably harsh

# Importance of educating about the policy

- Once policy is implemented, must
  - inform people who are affected that there is a policy
    - both enforcers and enforcees
  - explain provisions of policy
  - describe sanctions for noncompliance
  - describe procedures for noncompliance
    - training for enforcers may be required
  - create a mechanism to inform new people

# When Use Policy?

- When:
  - You have identified a problem or risk factor that can *best* be affected by a change in policy
  - there is an achievable policy that will support change
- Decision process  $\Rightarrow$

# Include Policies in Problem Analysis

Goal: decide what needs changing

Options:

- review of specific policies - present/absent, or compare existing policies to best practice
- analyze individual risk factors, then think about what policies might encourage better choices
- consider possible systems changes, and think about policies that would encourage those systems changes

# Think Though Possible Policies

- Examine what others have done in CVH, stroke prevention
- Examine policies designed to affect other health problems
- Brainstorm, use a logic model

# Decide Whether to Use Policy

- Use policy if:
  - You have identified a problem or risk factor that can *best* be affected by a change in policy
  - The identified policy change is
    - achievable (although it may be difficult!)
    - likely to affect the risk factor of interest
    - reasonable to pursue given the available time, money, other initiatives, etc.
- Policy isn't necessarily the “right” approach; it's a strategic decision
- Discussion: “working up the food chain”

# Making Policy Change

- Thoroughly understand the process -- what are the procedures for making a change?
- Identify the decision-maker(s), plus partners/collaborators that are needed to support the change
  - articulate how the change also meets each person's goals (in their view)
  - anticipate and be able to counter objections
  - get “enemies” on board, if possible

# Process Example: State Legislation

- Get a flow chart of “how a bill becomes a law”
- Strategize how to move bill through each step
- Need
  - a legislative sponsor
  - someone to draft the legislation, organize process
  - evidence of need for law (local data is best)
  - evidence of potential effectiveness of law
  - partners/supporters from affected constituencies
  - people to lobby key committee members
  - consider legislative briefings, press events
  - patience and persistence!!

## *“Case Study”*

### A Cooperative Effort to Pass Tobacco Control Ordinances Using the News Media

- In 1993, Wichita-Segwick County Health Department (Kansas):
  - identified tobacco-related problems of exposure to secondhand smoke and high youth access
  - identified possible solution: strengthening tobacco control through local ordinances

Source: Pippert et al, J Public Health Management Practice, 1995, 1(2), 18-22

# Process and Partners

- Identified policy change process:
  - needed approval of the Board of Health & City Council to pass ordinances
- Identified partners:
  - Wichita-Segwick County Health Dept enlisted the support of Tobacco-Free Wichita (TFW)

# Actions

1. TFW obtained model ordinances from Americans for Non-Smokers Rights (CA)
2. Decided on 2 ordinances:
  - prohibited smoking in all places used by public
  - merchants would need a local license to sell tobacco (contingent on refusal to sell to minors and making vending machines inaccessible to minors)

# Actions, con't

3. Perceiving negative reaction from media and industry, TFW sought to demonstrate strong public support. Sought support through:

- obtaining letters of support from local physicians, small business owners, and corporate interests
- staging public events to increase media attention
- surveying the population to determine public support

4. Worked with Kansas Health Dept to conduct a community survey

- overall, results showed support for ordinances

# Actions, con't

5. TFW released survey methods and results to press 1 week prior to BOH meeting & embargoed the information until the meeting.
6. Approval by the BOH was followed by a rally, increased positive media coverage.
7. Widespread interest resulted in scheduling of a public hearing in front of the city council.

# Actions (con't)

8. TFW carefully planned for the hearing:
  - each point presented by prominent professional
  - DOH presented data
  - teens presented results of sting operation & testimonials of devastating health impacts of tobacco on their families
9. Result: ordinances restricting minors' access to tobacco and licensing of merchants passed; a compromise passed requiring vending machines to have locking devices and be licensed.

# Factors Cited in Success

- Strong local coalition
- Strategic plan based on demonstrating professional and communitywide support
  - establish tobacco as public health concern
  - business support helped assuage fears that ordinances would create a negative business climate
  - survey data established public support
- Effective use of the media
  - high visibility made the city council pay attention and provided an opportunity to educate the public

# More Factors in Success

- Effort was local, coordinated
- Survey paid for by TFW
- Survey data were scientifically sound
- Council hearing was carefully planned