

# CHIA

Chronicles of Health  
Impact Assessment

Improving community health through health impact assessments

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## *PERSPECTIVES FROM THE FIELD*

### HIA TRAINING FOR PROFESSIONALS: HOW A UNIVERSITY-BASED CENTER CAN HELP TO BUILD AWARENESS AND CAPACITY

*Karen W. Lowrie, PhD; Leigh Ann Von Hagen, AICP/PP*



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**SOPHIA**

## Introduction

When a group of faculty and research staff from various subfields of planning at the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers University in New Jersey got together in 2012 around their common interest in fostering healthy communities, they realized there were gaps in connections and information-sharing between planners, public health professionals and policy-makers to understand health outcomes in non-health policy and project decisions. From initial discussions and research, the Planning Healthy Communities Initiative (PHCI) was born. PHCI is a multidisciplinary team at the Rutgers Bloustein School with expertise in active transportation and infrastructure, green buildings, environmental analysis, advancing health equity, and supporting community-based efforts. One of the pillars of the PHCI is capacity-building. Quick research revealed that by 2012, only one Health Impact Assessment (HIA) had been performed in New Jersey and that no other institution in the state was conducting or actively promoting HIA. Therefore organizations and governments had little awareness of them or capacity to perform them. PHCI stepped in to fill this gap in a number of ways, but perhaps the most in-depth and most direct was

the creation of a new one-day HIA training course that would be the first ever in New Jersey.

## HIA Class Specifics

One of the PHCI goals is to educate as many decision-makers and administrators in New Jersey as possible about the purpose and goals of HIA and Health in all Policies (HIAP). In spring of 2015, the first training course was offered. The course is one of many in varied fields listed with the Rutgers Office of Continuing Professional Education (CPE). Offering the class through CPE has many advantages including their lead role in advertising, classroom facility and catering setup, fee collection and online and onsite registration. CPE staff also assist with securing CEU's (see table below) from various professional associations, and issue participation certificates. With Rutgers CPE staff handling much of the class logistics, the facilitators from PHCI are responsible for instructing on the content, leading group exercises and discussions, and preparing PowerPoint slides and participant packets. PHCI also advertises the class through its website and that of the Bloustein School, and through e-mail blasts to other associations in the planning, development and public health fields.

### Some selected CEU's offered to HIA training participants:

<b>Rutgers University</b>	0.5 CEUs
<b>NJ Site Remediation Professional Licensing Board (NJSRPB)</b>	4.5 Regulatory credits
<b>Certified Health Education Specialists (CHES)</b>	4 Category 1 CE Credits
<b>Rutgers Planning and Zoning Certificate</b>	3 Technical Credits
<b>American Planners Association (APA)</b>	5 CEUs
<b>NJ Continuing Legal Education (CLE)</b>	3.4 CLEs
<b>NJ Health Officers and Registered Environmental Health Specialists (REHS)</b>	5 NJ Public Health Continuing Education Contact Hours (CEs)
<b>NJ Professional Engineers</b>	5 Continuing Professional Competency (CPC) credits

The one-day class runs from mid-morning through mid-afternoon, with breakfast and lunch provided. The instructional material covers the six steps of HIA through a mix of lecture and group exercises with report-outs. Exercises on screening, scoping, assessment and recommendations are conducted in groups of 4-8 participants. The class ends with discussion of the application of HIA in job settings, and brainstorming about resources needed to help participants to implement it in their workplaces. The facilitators draw on real-life examples from HIAs that PHCI has conducted in New Jersey over the past five years.

### Participant Evaluations

As of fall of 2018, about 150 people have attended the six sessions that have been conducted. Participants attend mostly from local and regional governments, non-profits and private consultants from the fields of planning, public and environmental health, community development and engineering. Recently, hospital employees have attended because hospitals are getting more involved with policy and with community health initiatives.

Many attend the training sessions for the credits, and some also for points awarded by Sustainable Jersey, a program that rewards NJ municipalities for taking actions to become more sustainable and improve quality of life. Others noted that they took the class because it sounded “interesting” and they wanted to learn more about this new screening tool to help with decision-making. The class is open to anyone, and several attendees have also come from outside New Jersey.

In post-class evaluation, a vast majority rated the class as “Excellent” or “Very Good” on program objectives, content, usefulness and stimulating interest in the topic. The most popular elements of the class are the group exercises and discussions, the breakdown of the six steps, and networking that occurred in the room

as people from across different sectors and different parts of the state meet each other and work together.

Participants were asked for the most valuable parts of the class and to describe what they learned. Answers demonstrate the value of the class in raising awareness and building some capacity for HIA in New Jersey.

Selected comments by HIA class participants on the learning value and benefits of the class:

- I learned how to incorporate an HIA into a project.
- I learned the importance of identifying and engaging subgroups to include in the process.
- I learned performing a health pathway.
- I really appreciated the sourced information in the presentation.
- Overall, course was an excellent introduction to the topic of HIA.
- Excellent program, I hope to implement HIA with township committee, planning board and Green Team.
- The information was very practical; the team work at tables was great.
- I learned that almost every decision has an impact on the health of the community and individuals.
- I am better equipped to promote role of health when working with counties and municipalities.
- HIA is really new to me-so I learned a lot of relevant vocabulary, concepts and case study applications.
- It broadened my perspective on health impacts.
- Class should be mandated for municipal government.

Extensions and follow-up suggested by attendees include the creation of a sharing distribution to continue collaboration and discussion among program attendees, and the offering of additional training that focuses more on the role of regulation and government and/or that goes into more detail on HIA or HIA 2.0 applications.

## Key Takeaways

For the PHCI facilitators, the HIA training class has been a fun, worthwhile, and interesting experience. We feel that it is an ideal role for a University because we can offer training at a less expensive price, utilize/leverage in-house expertise and resources, and we are perceived as a “neutral” organization and site without any political or financial motive or connection with advocacy.


After almost four years, we have developed a set of take-away messages – some in the form of general observations and some in the form of wishes for the future of the program:

- The language of health is different from the language of other professional fields...Thinking through a health lens is sometimes a difficult exercise for those in non-health fields. Teaching about health pathways and logic models therefore can create “lightbulb moments” in attendees from non-health sectors.
- Many class participants see the value of HIA, but wonder how to get it done. The most common concern usually centers on questions about resources and capacities to conduct HIA and justifying the time to do it given the lack of mandates.
- Many attendees lack the confidence that they will be able to sift through data sources and to analyze, understand and trust data without expert help.
- Connecting people across disciplines around health impacts can forge new relationships around common goals. People meeting other people from different sectors and different types of organizations, and hearing each other’s perspectives is one of the great benefits of the training.

We hope to respond to the recommendations of attendees for a “Part 2” class offering. We have also re-packaged the content prepared for the six-hour class into shorter 1, 2 and 3-hour versions to take “on the road” to various other organizations, with similar positive reactions from audiences.

We at PHCI are happy to further discuss our experiences and share our insights with others considering developing similar programs. Please contact Karen Lowrie ([klowrie@rutgers.edu](mailto:klowrie@rutgers.edu)) or Leigh Ann Von Hagen ([lavh@rutgers.edu](mailto:lavh@rutgers.edu)), and visit our website at [phci.rutgers.edu](http://phci.rutgers.edu).

## Promotional Flyer for HIA Training Course



### Health Impact Assessment: Incorporating Health into Planning and Decision-Making

**DATE:** Friday, February 3, 2019  
**TIME:** 9:00 am - 3:00 pm  
**LOCATION:** New Brunswick, NJ  
**FEES:** \$130.00

*Register with a colleague and save!  
Two or more, only \$100 per person*

**WHO SHOULD ATTEND:**

- Attorneys (CLE)
- Health Educators (CHES)
- Municipal Finance
- Municipal Professional Engineers (PE)
- Professional Planners (AIA)
- Public Health Professionals (PH/REHS)
- Site Remediation Professionals (LSRF)

This course is eligible for 30 points toward certification in the Sustainable Jersey program under the "Health in All Publics Professional Development Training" action. An application has been submitted to award Certified Health Specialists (CHS) and Master Certified Health Education Specialists (MCHES) up to Total Category 1 Continuing Education Contact Hours (CECH). Maximum Advanced-level contact hours available are 15. The Rutgers Office of Public Health Practice is a designated multiple award provider of CECHs by the National Commission for Health Education Credentialing. Visit [www.sustainablejersey.com](http://www.sustainablejersey.com) for more information on the Sustainable Jersey program!

**HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT (HIA)** can be used to evaluate a proposed plan or project's potential effects on the health of a population. HIA provides evidence-based recommendations aimed at enhancing positive health impacts and minimizing negative ones.

In this course, the **PLANNING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE (PHCI)** will lead an introductory training on health impact assessment as a tool to promote community health and equity in planning processes and decision-making. Participants engage in group exercises related to HIA steps, discuss opportunities and challenges to integrating health into planning and policy processes, and learn about new statewide collaborative initiatives and emerging tools to build capacity for health advancement in planning, and to support health in all policies.

- Understand the broader context of health influences and the social determinants of health.
- Understand the principles, value, and use of HIA, as well as the steps involved in conducting an HIA.
- Understand applicability of HIA to planning, development and land use decision-making and processes.
- Explore opportunities to incorporate HIA and/or health in all policies in local government decision-making.
- Review the resources available to local government decision-makers and citizens that wish to include health consideration in community planning.

To learn more, contact Rutgers University Office of Continuing Professional Education  
PHONE: 609-932-7234 | EMAIL: [suzanne.hills@rutgers.edu](mailto:suzanne.hills@rutgers.edu) | WEB: [www.cpe.rutgers.edu/HIA](http://www.cpe.rutgers.edu/HIA)

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## **CORRESPONDING AUTHOR**

Karen Lowrie, PhD  
Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy  
Rutgers University  
33 Livingston Ave.  
New Brunswick, NJ 08901  
klowrie@rutgers.edu

### *CHLA Staff:*

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