

Ingham County Board of Health

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF
ADOPTING A HEALTH-IN-ALL-POLICIES APPROACH TO DECISION-MAKING
IN INGHAM COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Over several months, the Ingham County Board of Health has reviewed and considered the benefits of an approach to decision-making that has been adopted by many municipal and county governments across the nation. This approach is commonly referred to as “Health in All Policies.” If applied in a concrete and rigorous way, this approach provides both a mindset and a process for incorporating considerations of health equity into all public policy decisions.

In most communities that have successfully adopted a Health in All Policies approach, the primary mechanism for applying it has been an interdepartmental body with representation from all sectors of community life over which the governing body (in the case of a county, a Board of Commissioners) has influence. The members of this interdepartmental body receive training and technical assistance in understanding the ways in which decisions about housing, employment, education, transportation, land use, etc., can create the conditions that promote or discourage health, especially for residents who are already marginalized by virtue of their race or ethnicity, socio-economic status, mental or physical disability, language of origin, age, or other aspect of their identity. The primary function of the interdepartmental body is to serve the governing body by 1) considering any new governmental policy for which the likely health impacts are not clear; 2) considering current governmental policy whose negative health impacts have been called into question by the public; 3) analyzing the health impacts of any such policy; and 4) providing recommendations to the governing body on any changes in these policies that would reduce negative health impacts.

There are several important tools that members of such an interdepartmental team can use in carrying out their analyses. The most important of these are various forms of Health Impact Assessment. The Ingham County Health Department has considerable experience in developing and applying Health Impact Assessments with varying levels of sophistication. The department’s considerable work in promoting health equity and environmental justice are additional assets that can inform the development and orientation of an interdepartmental team.

The Ingham County Board of Health believes that the promotion of good health requires attention to the underlying conditions in which people live, in addition to behavioral choices and access to quality health care. It further believes that every Ingham County resident should have the opportunity to make choices that will allow for a long and healthy life, and that policies in all aspects of community life may limit or expand those choices for some people.

Therefore, we encourage the Ingham County Board of Commissioners to adopt a Health in All Policies approach to decision-making in Ingham County government, and that in doing so Ingham County serve as a model for other units of government throughout Michigan.