Influencing Health Policy: How to Write Health Policy Briefs

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Have you ever thought...

• How can I help more people?

• Even if interventions are effective, how can people keep up behavior change given our environment and policy challenges?

• My background is not in health policy. How can I participate and make an impact anyway?

• I’ve never done this before and am a little nervous. Where do I start?
What is a Health Policy Brief?

• “Concise summary of a particular issue, policy options to deal with it, recommendations for future legislation...”
• “Document presenting findings and recommendations of research to a non-specialized audience...”
• “...Means for exploring all sides of an issue”
• “A vehicle for providing policy advice...”
• NOT A RESEARCH BRIEF
Format of a Health Policy Brief

1. Brief background
2. Summary of issues - Statement of Problem
3. Evidence
4. Current state of policy
5. Summary
6. Recommendations
Example of a brief
POSITION STATEMENT:

Enact Taxes on Sugary Drinks to Prevent Chronic Disease

(February 2017) Daniel R. Taber, PhD, MPH, Healthy Food America, Seattle, WA; Akinah D. Keita, PhD, Brown University, Providence, RI; Megan Fallon, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, RI; Frank J. Chaloupka, PhD, University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, IL; and Tatiana Andreyeva, PhD, Marlene B. Schwartz, PhD, and Jennifer L. Harris, PhD, MBA, Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity, Hartford, CT

The Society of Behavioral Medicine supports sugary drink taxes to reduce excessive sugar consumption, prevent chronic disease, and reduce health disparities. The taxes should apply to beverages that contain added caloric sweeteners, not including artificial sweeteners.

BACKGROUND
Consumption of sugary drinks has a detrimental effect on public health by increasing risk of chronic diseases such
SBM Recommends

- Society of Behavioral Medicine supports sugary drink taxes to reduce excessive sugar consumption, prevent chronic disease, and reduce health disparities
Policymakers Should Tax Sugary Drinks to Improve Health

Here’s How to Create a Tax for Your State or City

Taxes Work as a Deterrent

Drinking sugary beverages increases your risk of obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and fatty liver disease. Taxes on sugary drinks encourage the purchase of lower-cost, healthier alternatives like water.

- Mexico’s 1 peso-per-liter tax reduced sugary drink purchases by 12%.
- A penny-per-ounce tax in Berkeley, CA, reduced sugary drink consumption by 21% among low-income residents.

How to Create a Sugary Drink Tax that Gets Results

Enact an excise tax

This is better than a sales tax because it is imposed directly on businesses and is designed to increase the shelf price of sugary drinks.

Apply the tax to more than soda

Target carbonated soft drinks, sports drinks, fruit drinks, energy drinks, sweetened tea and coffees, and syrups and powders used to make sweeterened beverages.
What makes a brief an effective brief?
What makes a brief an effective brief?

1. Briefs are BRIEF
2. Lay language
3. Summary of research to support recommendations
4. Know your audience!
   1. Sometimes worth developing different versions of the same policy briefs
   2. For legislators, include cost data if possible
5. Make sure the audience can do something about recommendations!
What makes a brief an effective brief?

6. Not all issues need to be covered, but issues related to recs do!
7. Timely
8. Plenty of evidence to support your point of view
9. Addresses an important problem- important to mission
10. Clearly stated position
Why Engage Partners?

1. Develop relationships for future collaboration
2. Increase the impact of the briefs
3. Receive broader expert feedback on briefs
Dissemination

• Think BIG
  – Publish in academic journals
  – Partner with relevant organizations
  – Post on organization website
  – Webinars/teleconferences like this one!
  – Engage the media with your policy brief
  – Share with legislative aides on Capitol Hill visits
Dissemination

• Think small
  – Share on your own social media
  – Share through listservs
  – Utilize any existing groups in which you are already a member (e.g. PTA, civic groups)
  – Contact local, small market media (e.g. hometown newspaper)
  – Create briefs for school boards, city councils, etc.
Research to Policy Translation

Research → Practice

Research → Policy
Conclusions

• YOU can develop a health policy brief of your own!
• What policy issues mean the most to you?
• You can help to advocate for change
Requests for Public Comment
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- International/National Organizations

- Healthcare entities (e.g., Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services)

- National Guideline Groups (e.g., U.S. Preventive Services Task Force)
Quick Deadlines
Components of Public Comment

• Start comment with a statement in support of or disapproval of the proposed guideline, policy, research review, etc.

• Provide evidence (with references) for reasons of support or disapproval and align with specific points in the proposal
  – Can even be written as bullet points

• Summarize major points at the end
Recent Public Comments

• Medicare Diabetes Prevention Program Proposal
Recent Public Comments contd.

- APAPO Resolution on Integrated Primary Care

- APA Pediatric Obesity Treatment Guidelines

- USPSTF Recommendation Statement on Weight Loss to Prevent Obesity Related Morbidity and Mortality in Adults: Behavioral Interventions
Thank You!

• Questions?
• https://societyforhealthpsychology.org/councils-committees/health-policy-council/
Acknowledgements

• Health Policy Council at Society for Health Psychology, American Psychological Association (APA)
• Dr. Jonathan Purtle, reviewer and researcher in health policy communication
• APA Policy
• Society for Behavioral Medicine