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# Promoting Science in the Public Health Policy Process: Tools and Resources for Researchers, Practitioners, and Advocates

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*Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health*

*Active Living Research Annual Conference Workshop*
*February 22, 2015*

Protecting Health, Saving Lives—*Millions at a Time*

# Workshop Goal and Objectives

- Goal: provide participants with concrete strategies and skills needed to advance evidence-based and evidence-informed active living interventions throughout the policy process.

- Objectives:
  - Use what is known about how policymakers and implementers make decisions to identify opportunities for engaging in the policy process.
  - Identify opportunities and strategies for promoting scientific evidence throughout the policy process.
  - Develop a plan for engaging relevant stakeholders in advancing active living interventions through new policy initiatives and/or strategies to promote improved implementation of existing policies.

# During our 90 minutes Together

- Module 1: Science informing policy
- Module 2: Science informing implementation
- Discussion and Q & A
- Resources

# Module 1: Science Informing Policy

- Policy-relevant research and evidence-based policymaking
- Challenge is that science is often absent from the policy process
  - Gap b/w researchers and policymakers and practitioners
  - Why?
- Policymakers are faced with a body of research that is diffuse and contradictory, with few tools available to organize and make sense of diverse results

# Communicating with Policymakers

- Content information with the goal of influencing the policy agenda and policy decisions
  - Brining science to the policy process
- Importance of this skill to policymaking
- Relevance to professional development
- What we are not talking about today: Traditional and Social media

# Research on Communicating with Policymakers

Sorian & Baugh, 2002

- Survey of state policy makers
- How much do they read?
  - 27% (detail), 53% (skim), 35% (don't get to)
- What do they read?
  - Relevance: current debate (67%), real people (25%), information about similar states (11%), easy to read format (11%)
  - Irrelevant: not about real problems (36%), too long, dense, or detailed (22%), to theoretical, technical or jargony (20%), biased (19%)
- Trusted information sources

Colby, et al., 2008

- Translation
- Accessible and easy to use
- Relevant

The RWJF Synthesis Project

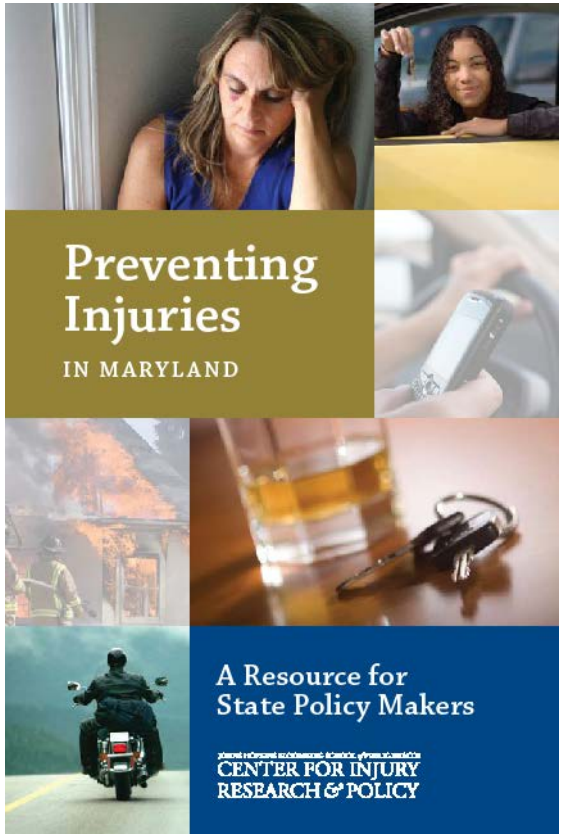
- Weighting and translating
- User-friendly products
  - Start with questions, not research
  - Findings, not methods
  - Easy to review format
  - Policymaker input

# Colby et al (2008)

- Translation
  - Intermediaries
  - Researchers as intermediaries?
  - “I may not follow the researcher’s advice, but I want to know what they think” (Sorian and Baugh, 2002)
- Accessible and easy to use
  - Variation in policymakers information needs – layer approach
- Relevance
  - Timeliness; policymakers estimated that 49% of the information they receive is not relevant to their current work (Sorian and Baugh, 2002)

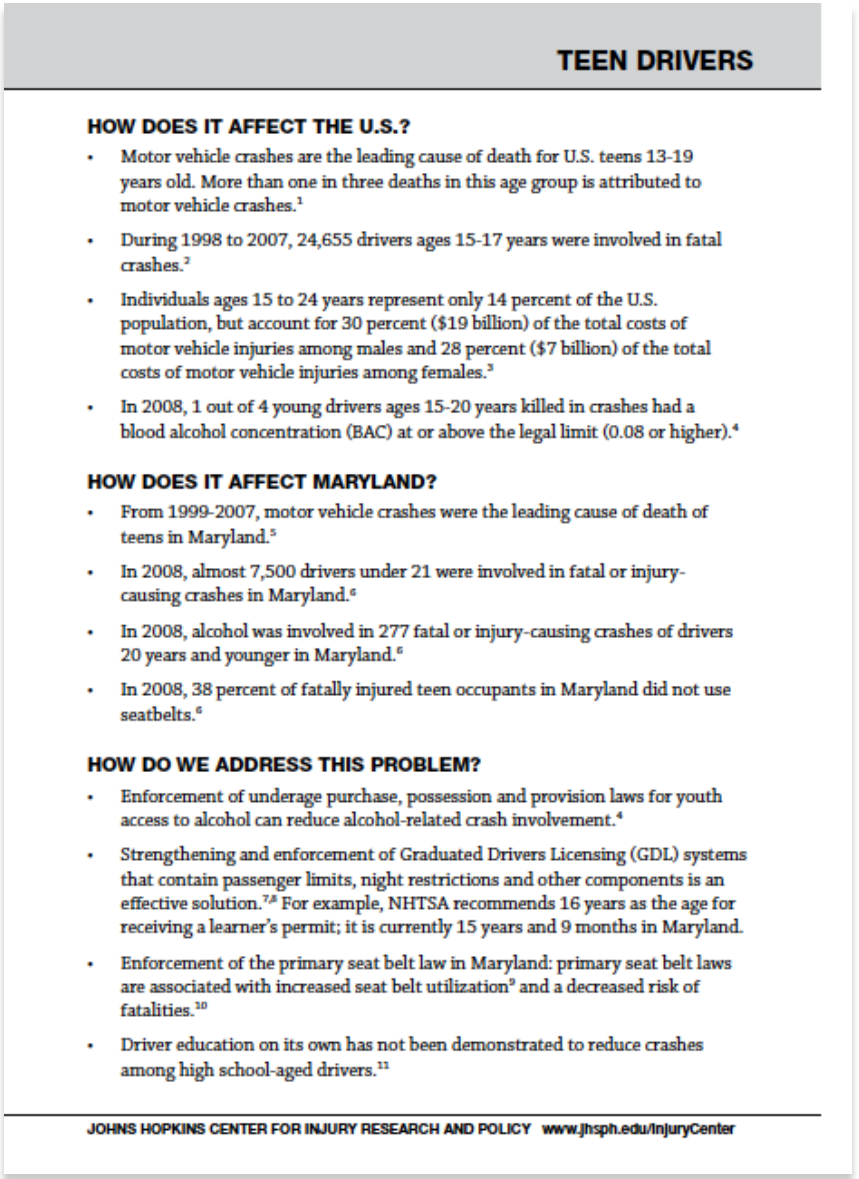
# Example of Writing for a Policy Audience: Fact Sheets

- Characteristics of the Resource
  - 6”x9” spiral bound
  - Heavy card stock
  - Tabbed, labeled divider pages
  - Color pictures
- Content of the Resource
  - Introductory letter from Center Director and Communications Director
  - 8 injury topics
  - 1 page bulleted fact sheets, standard format
  - Additional resources and references
  - Center contact information



# Example of Writing for a Policy Audience: Fact Sheets

- Fact sheet content
  - How does it affect the U.S.?
  - How does this affect Maryland?
  - How do we address this problem?
- Characteristics
  - Most current, reliable data
  - Evidence-based
  - Select, policy relevant facts
  - Brief bullet points
  - Clear, non-technical language
  - Include citations



**TEEN DRIVERS**

**HOW DOES IT AFFECT THE U.S.?**

- Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for U.S. teens 13-19 years old. More than one in three deaths in this age group is attributed to motor vehicle crashes.[1]
- During 1998 to 2007, 24,655 drivers ages 15-17 years were involved in fatal crashes.[2]
- Individuals ages 15 to 24 years represent only 14 percent of the U.S. population, but account for 30 percent ($19 billion) of the total costs of motor vehicle injuries among males and 28 percent ($7 billion) of the total costs of motor vehicle injuries among females.[3]
- In 2008, 1 out of 4 young drivers ages 15-20 years killed in crashes had a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) at or above the legal limit (0.08 or higher).[4]

**HOW DOES IT AFFECT MARYLAND?**

- From 1999-2007, motor vehicle crashes were the leading cause of death of teens in Maryland.[5]
- In 2008, almost 7,500 drivers under 21 were involved in fatal or injury-causing crashes in Maryland.[6]
- In 2008, alcohol was involved in 277 fatal or injury-causing crashes of drivers 20 years and younger in Maryland.[6]
- In 2008, 38 percent of fatally injured teen occupants in Maryland did not use seatbelts.[6]

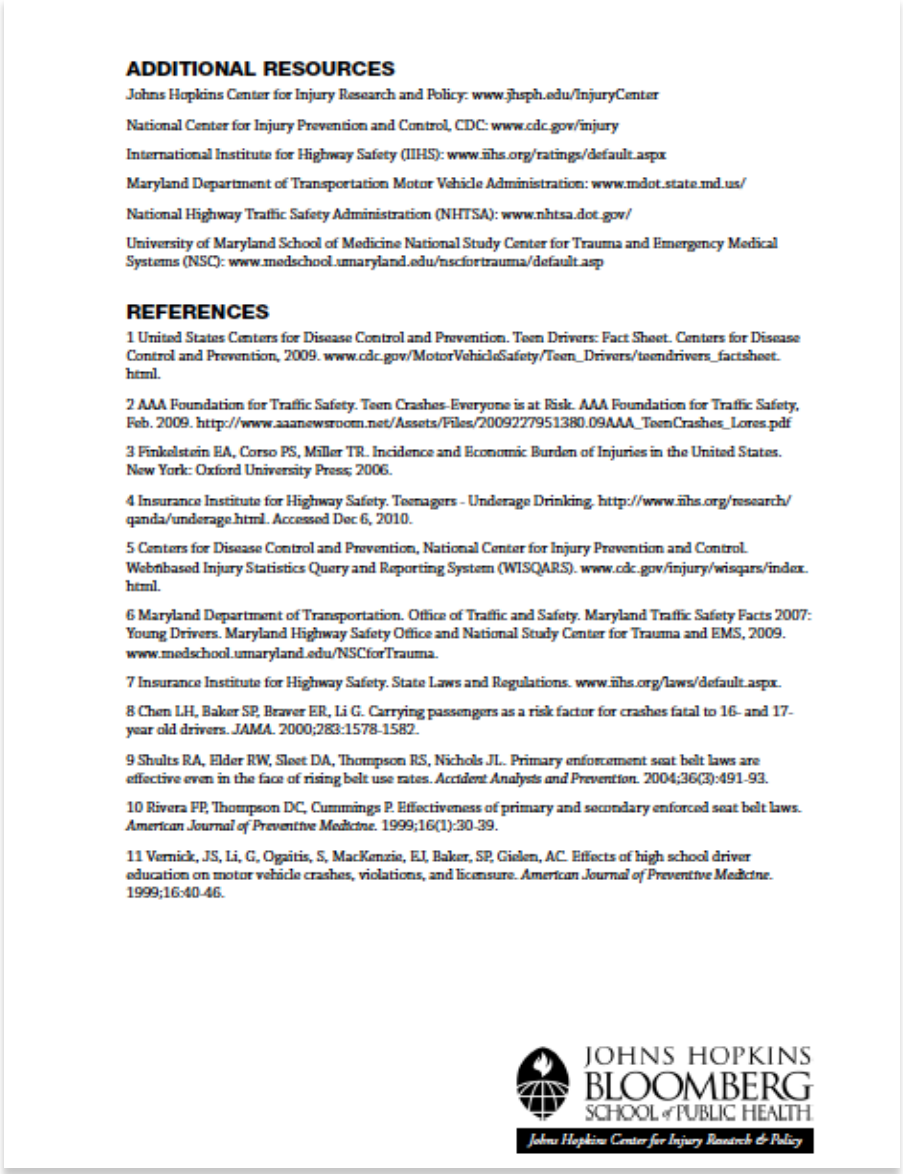
**HOW DO WE ADDRESS THIS PROBLEM?**

- Enforcement of underage purchase, possession and provision laws for youth access to alcohol can reduce alcohol-related crash involvement.[4]
- Strengthening and enforcement of Graduated Drivers Licensing (GDL) systems that contain passenger limits, night restrictions and other components is an effective solution.[7,8] For example, NHTSA recommends 16 years as the age for receiving a learner's permit; it is currently 15 years and 9 months in Maryland.
- Enforcement of the primary seat belt law in Maryland: primary seat belt laws are associated with increased seat belt utilization[9] and a decreased risk of fatalities.[10]
- Driver education on its own has not been demonstrated to reduce crashes among high school-aged drivers.[11]

JOHNS HOPKINS CENTER FOR INJURY RESEARCH AND POLICY www.jhsph.edu/InjuryCenter

# Example of Writing for a Policy Audience: Fact Sheets

- Additional Resources
  - Websites of relevant agencies and organizations
- References
  - Full citations
- Purpose
  - Facilitate access to credible resources to inform policy making



## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Johns Hopkins Center for Injury Research and Policy: www.jhsph.edu/InjuryCenter

National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, CDC: www.cdc.gov/injury

International Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS): www.iihs.org/ratings/default.aspx

Maryland Department of Transportation Motor Vehicle Administration: www.mdot.state.md.us/

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA): www.nhtsa.dot.gov/

University of Maryland School of Medicine National Study Center for Trauma and Emergency Medical Systems (NSC): www.medschool.umaryland.edu/nscfortrauma/default.asp

## REFERENCES


1 United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Teen Drivers: Fact Sheet. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009. www.cdc.gov/MotorVehicleSafety/Teen_Drivers/teendrivers_factsheet.html.

2 AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. Teen Crashes-Everyone is at Risk. AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, Feb. 2009. http://www.aaanewsroom.net/Assets/Files/20092279513380.09AAA_TeenCrashes_Lores.pdf

3 Finkelstein EA, Corso PS, Miller TR. Incidence and Economic Burden of Injuries in the United States. New York: Oxford University Press; 2006.

4 Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. Teenagers - Underage Drinking. http://www.iihs.org/research/qanda/underage.html. Accessed Dec 6, 2010.

5 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. Webnbased Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS). www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/index.html.

6 Maryland Department of Transportation. Office of Traffic and Safety. Maryland Traffic Safety Facts 2007: Young Drivers. Maryland Highway Safety Office and National Study Center for Trauma and EMS, 2009. www.medschool.umaryland.edu/NSCforTrauma.

7 Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. State Laws and Regulations. www.iihs.org/laws/default.aspx.

8 Chen LH, Baker SP, Braver ER, Li G. Carrying passengers as a risk factor for crashes fatal to 16- and 17-year old drivers. *JAMA*. 2000;283:1578-1582.

9 Shults RA, Elder RW, Sleet DA, Thompson RS, Nichols JL. Primary enforcement seat belt laws are effective even in the face of rising belt use rates. *Accident Analysis and Prevention*. 2004;36(3):491-93.

10 Rivera FP, Thompson DC, Cummings P. Effectiveness of primary and secondary enforced seat belt laws. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*. 1999;16(1):30-39.

11 Vernick, JS, Li, G, Ogaitis, S, MacKenzie, EJ, Baker, SP, Gielen, AC. Effects of high school driver education on motor vehicle crashes, violations, and licensure. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*. 1999;16:40-46.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*Johns Hopkins Center for Injury Research & Policy*

# Disseminating the Resource

- Legislative briefing
- Targeted office visits
- Targeted mail distribution of hard copies
  - 4 committees; n=88 legislators
- Email with link to remaining legislators
  - n=100
- Op-ed
- Being updated now

# Example of Writing for a Policy Audience: Issue Brief

REPORT BRIEF JANUARY 2015

INSTITUTE OF MEDICINE AND
NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL
OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMIES

For more information visit www.iom.edu/foodsystem

## A Framework for Assessing Effects of the Food System


**The U.S. food supply chain is deeply interconnected** with human and environmental health, as well as social and economic systems. Decisions about food policies and practices, therefore, can have unintended impacts—both positive and negative. To arrive at a decision for which the benefits outweigh the risks, decision makers must carefully consider a broad range of effects and interactions across the health, environmental, social, and economic domains.

To aid in this complex analytical process, the Institute of Medicine and the National Research Council convened an expert committee to develop a framework to assist in food and agriculture decision making. The committee's report, *A Framework for Assessing Effects of the Food System*, sponsored by The JPB Foundation, presents guiding principles and practical steps to help stakeholders weigh tradeoffs and choose policies that integrate benefits and risks across various domains.

**To arrive at a decision for which the benefits outweigh the risks, decision makers must carefully consider a broad range of effects and interactions across the health, environmental, social, and economic domains.**

### Characteristics of the Food System

The U.S. food system functions through a supply chain of producers, processors, and distributors that delivers food to consumers; consumers, in turn, send signals back up the chain about what and how much to produce. This process provides the U.S. population with a varied, relatively inexpensive, and plentiful supply of food.

The supply chain is connected to the global food system and operates within a diverse and ever-changing array of economic, biophysical, social, and institutional contexts. A myriad of actors (e.g., farmers, processors, policy makers, and consumers) makes decisions that shape the food system every day. These actors have diverse goals that include improving health, protecting the environment, and increasing productivity.

Decisions that affect one part of the food system, however, may have unexpected consequences beyond their original intent, in both the United States and abroad. Changes may impact the environment (including effects on biodiversity, water, soil, air, and climate), human health (such as diet-related chronic disease risk), and society (including effects on food accessibility and affordability, land use, employment, labor conditions, and local economies). At the same time, decision makers adapt as the food system changes.

In short, the food system is complex and adaptive—that is, composed of many different pieces whose interactions drive behavior in ways that cannot easily be understood by considering any one component separately. Studies to inform food and agricultural decisions, therefore, require an analytical approach and methodologies capable of considering the full range of key interactions, adaptations, and other features of complex systems.

### A Framework for Assessing Decisions

The committee proposes a framework to serve as a tool for decision makers, researchers, and other stakeholders to examine the breadth of possible outcomes. The framework can help identify unintended effects; promote transparency among stakeholders; improve communication and understanding of differing values and perspectives among scientists, policy makers, and other stakeholders; and decrease the likelihood that results of a policy analysis might be misinterpreted.

The framework begins with six steps common to any comprehensive assessment:

1. *Identify the problem*—What is the goal of the assessment?
2. *Define the scope of the assessment*—What are the time, budgetary, and other limitations? What are the elements of the food system to be analyzed? What are its boundaries (e.g., a particular food commodity, time, or geographic area)? What are the knowledge gaps, and how can results from existing studies be utilized?
3. *Identify the scenarios*—What are the potential new policies or practices that should be considered?
4. *Conduct the analysis*—What are the data needs, and which analytic tools are most appropriate?
5. *Synthesize the results*—What are the impacts and tradeoffs across health, environmental, social, and economic domains, and how can they be compared?
6. *Report the findings*—Who are the key stakeholders to inform?

Next, the committee presents four principles that should guide each step of the analysis:

1. *Consider effects across the full food system*: Assessments should consider positive and negative outcomes along the full supply chain and across all relevant domains and contexts.
2. *Address all domains and dimensions of effects*: Within each domain, four dimensions of effects—quantity, quality, distribution, and resilience—measure how much the food system provides, where and to whom it goes, and how sustainably it can do so. Judgments about the relative importance of these dimensions for any particular assessment may vary by situation.
3. *Account for system dynamics and complexities*: Given the tendency of complex interactions to trigger dynamic repercussions, assessments should, to the extent feasible, account for effects across time, space, and populations and should acknowledge the potential role of underlying drivers and interacting pathways. While the scope limitations may preclude a specific study from complete consideration of all effects and drivers, it is important for any study to define its boundaries and assumptions. It is also important that the team of assessors has appropriate expertise and resources.

**The food system is complex and adaptive—that is, composed of many different pieces whose interactions drive behavior in ways that cannot easily be understood by considering any one component separately.**

4. *Choose appropriate methods*: Careful choice of metrics and methods is fundamental to conducting a meaningful assessment. Prevailing standards of evidence govern the choice of metrics and methods and vary across health, environmental, social, and economic effects because the measurement challenges are specific to each of these domains. The assumptions, limitations, accuracy, sensitivity, and other relevant factors for methods used should be clearly stated in the assessment.

## Lessons Learned from Real-World Examples

To demonstrate how the framework might be used, the committee applies the first three steps, as well as the four guiding principles, to several examples. Application of the final three steps would be beyond the scope of the study. The committee considers the following real-world food and agricultural decision areas: the use of antibiotics in agriculture; recommendations for fish consumption and health; biofuel blending in gasoline supplies; recommendations to increase fruit and vegetable consumption; nitrogen dynamics and management in agro-ecosystems; and egg production practices. Each of these examples yields unintended consequences in multiple domains, demonstrating the complexity of the food system and the need for a framework that considers the breadth of effects and their interactions.

The committee's descriptions of these examples, in addition to a comprehensive literature review, yields several conclusions. First, the committee finds that policies or actions that aim for an outcome in one area of the food system can have a range of consequences in other domains. These consequences may be substantial and out of proportion to the change in the originating domain. Studies that consider the entire food supply chain and address multiple domains and dimensions of effects can help identify these important outcomes and tradeoffs—tradeoffs that could be missed in more narrowly focused assessments. However, the committee notes that such comprehensive studies are rare in the current literature.

Data and methodologies for assessing the food system come from both public and private initiatives. Both are critically important, but lack of public access to data collected by industry can be a major challenge for researchers.

The committee concludes that engaging a wide variety of stakeholders throughout the assessment can promote the sharing of data and best practices, avoid conflicts of interest, ensure equitable participation, and address public concerns about transparency.

Finally, the committee finds that system-wide approaches will be needed to meet challenges to the U.S. food system in the 21st century, including antibiotic and pesticide resistance; chemical contamination of air and water; soil erosion and degradation; water deficits; and diet-related chronic disease, obesity, and domestic and global hunger and malnutrition and food safety. To develop robust solutions for these challenges, it will be important not only to identify the effects of the current system but also to understand the drivers of those effects—including human behavior, market dynamics, and policy issues. Such understanding can help decision makers identify the best opportunities to intervene and allow them to anticipate potential consequences.


**Committee on a Framework for Assessing the Health, Environmental, and Social Effects of the Food System**

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**Study Sponsor**

The JPB Foundation


## Critical Needs for Using the Framework

The committee identifies two areas that need urgent attention to make best use of the framework: the need for data collection (as well as development of validated metrics and methodologies), and the need for increased human capacity. The committee recommends that Congress and federal agencies continue funding and supporting the collection (and improvement) of datasets that can be used for food system assessment studies, and consider the need for new data collection programs as priorities arise. The committee supports federal efforts to share data and recommends the development of public-private mechanisms for collaboration.

Furthermore, there is a need to train scientists in academia, the private sector, and government agencies in all aspects of complex systems approaches—including systems research design, data collection, and analytical methodologies—and the use of models. It is particularly important that federal agencies have the analytical capacity to undertake assessments using principles of the framework as they consider domestic and global consequences of proposed policy changes.

## Conclusion

*A Framework for Assessing the Effects of the Food System* is intended to stimulate broad thinking among policy makers, researchers, and other stakeholders about the consequences of food system policies and other interventions beyond a single dimension. The committee's framework provides decision makers with a basis to understand and analyze effects, weigh tradeoffs, and guide decision making within a complex and ever-changing food system.


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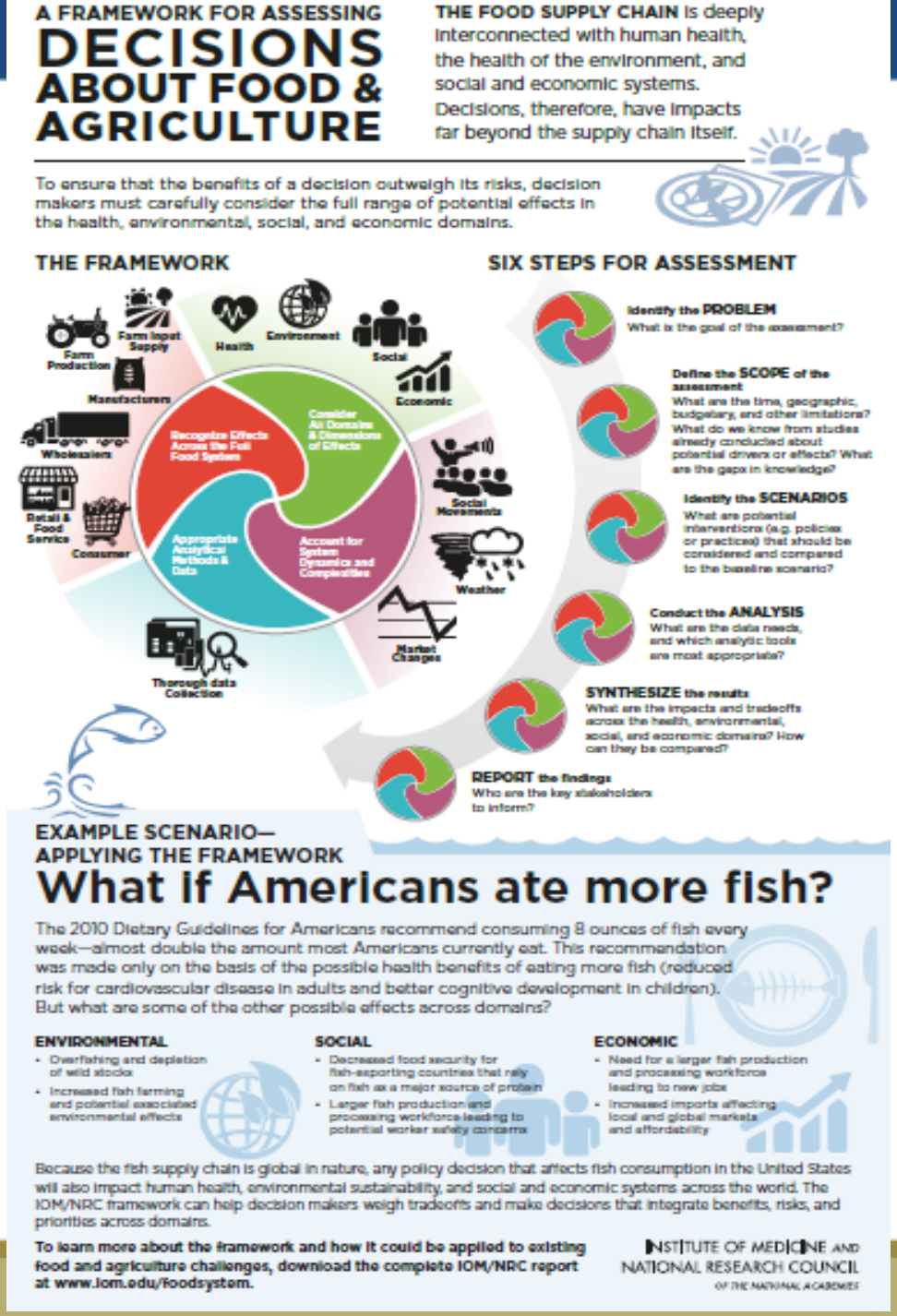
# Infographics



# Verbal Communications with Policymakers

- Meetings
- Testimony
- Elevator pitch

# Elevator Pitch: 60 Seconds to Impress

- Tips for Success
  - Introduce yourself
  - What problem does your policy address?
  - How does it relate to your audience?
  - 1 or 2 facts
  - Connect with your audience
  - Be brief
  - Know your ask
  - Provide contact information

# Communicating with Policymakers

- Pitfalls to Avoid
  - Talking fast
  - Relying on overly scientific explanations
  - Not knowing your audience
  - Using jargon and acronyms
  - Overstaying your welcome
  - Making something up!
    - It's perfectly find to say "I don't know, but I will get back to you"
  - Not having an "ask" or a plan

# Skill Building: Practice Communicating


- Example: Complete Streets
- Refer to Elevator Pitch Guide for Instructions

# Remember

- Follow-up on any requests
- Follow-up with a thank you
- Policy communications are most effective when they rest on established relationships; work to build those relationships.

- You are an asset!

# Module 2: Science Informing Implementation


- Implementation is “the act of fulfilling or carrying out an intention, which in health research can be policies, programs, or individual practices (collectively called interventions).”

- “Implementation research is characterized by seeking to understand and work within real world or usual practice settings, paying particular attention to the audience that will use the research, the context in which implementation occurs, and the factors that influence implementation.”

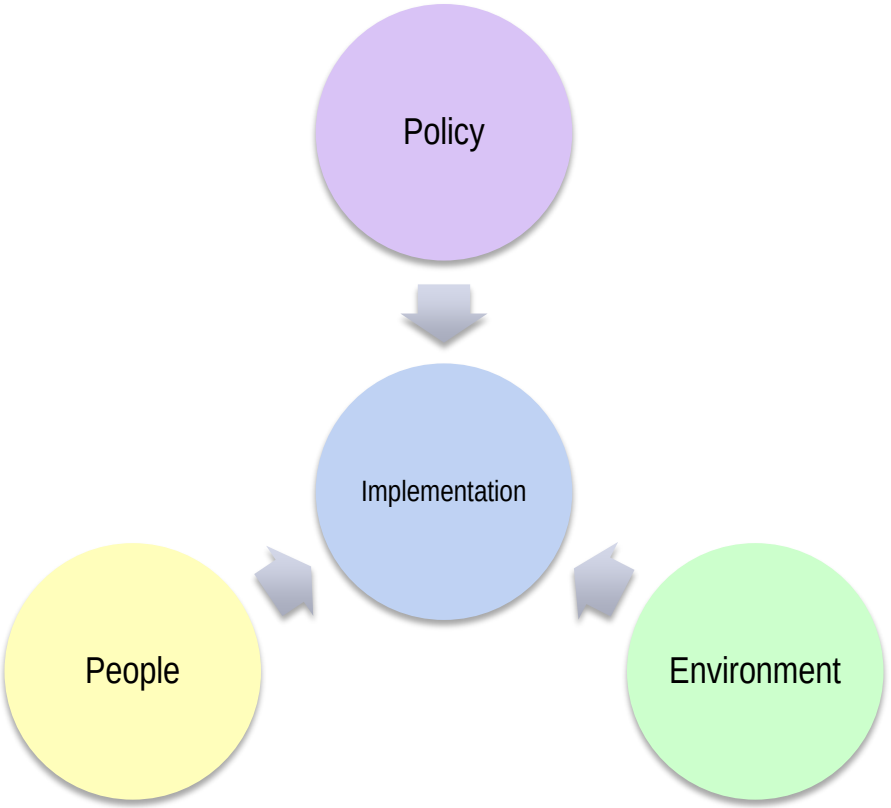
*Peters, Adam, Alonge, Agyepng, Tran. Implementation research: What it is and how to do it. BMJ, 2013.*

# Why is Implementation Research Relevant to Your Work?

- Challenges with bringing policy interventions into practice
- Need to understand the “why” and “how” behind policy success and failure.
- Desire to increase the impact of interventions

# Review of the Policy Implementation Literature: Common Elements and Emerging Theory

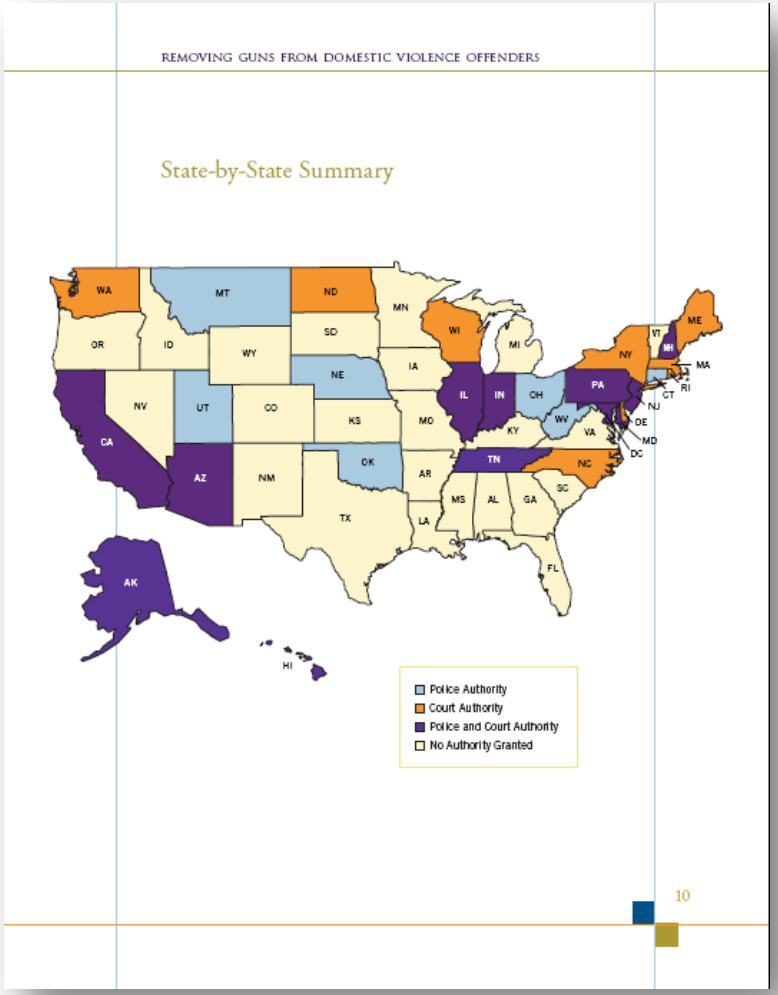
- Policy
  - Policy formulation and policy implementation are linked
  - Policy details matter; design effects delivery
- People
  - People matter; stakeholders are often influential in implementation
- Context
  - Competing issues and priorities
  - Barriers to implementation



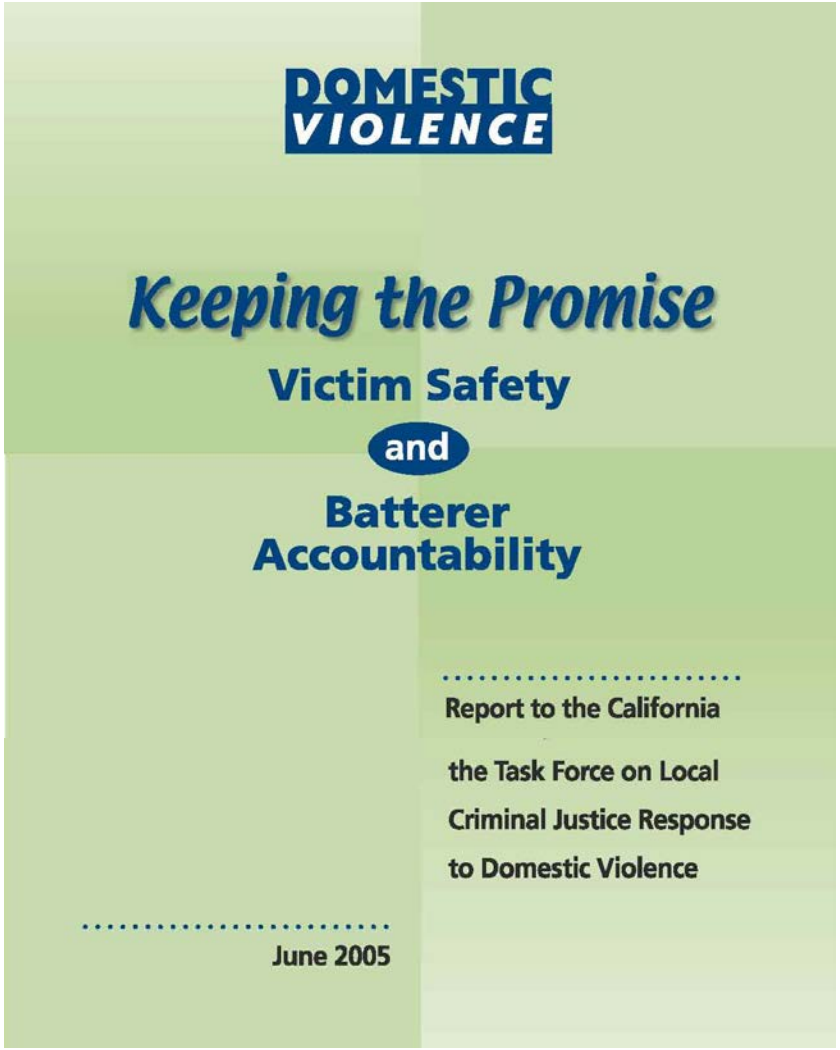
# Case Example of Policy Implementation Research: Domestic Violence and Guns in California

# State Laws to Separate Batters from Guns

- State laws that aim to separate batterers from guns exist
- Policy evaluations demonstrate an association between certain laws and IPV homicide
- Opportunity for increased implementation and protection through existing law



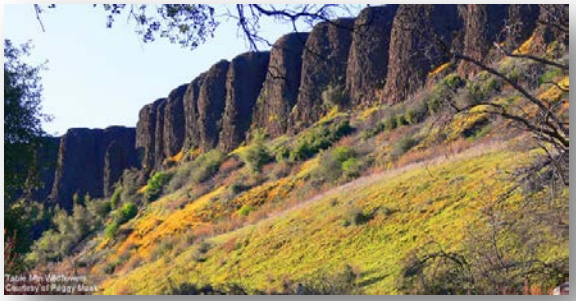
# California Initiative on Domestic Violence



# The Firearms and Domestic Violence Education Intervention Project

- Project Goals:
  - Serve and enter domestic violence restraining orders into DVROS in a timely manner;
  - Develop a system to remove/facilitate relinquishment of firearms from people subject to dv restraining orders;
  - Educate about laws regarding possession and confiscation of firearms from people subject to domestic violence restraining orders.

# The California Experiment

# Findings

- System in Place, Removing Guns
  - Identifying Guns
    - Automated Firearm System (AFS)
    - Review of restraining order applications
    - Conversations with protected parties
  - Serving Orders
  - Removing Guns
  - Returning Guns

- Training Local Law Enforcement Agencies

# Implementation Lessons Learned

- Policy: Details matter
- Policy: Complementary policies matter
  - Legislative change: expansion of point of sale purchase records to include long guns
  - Regulatory changes: shorten time to surrender from 48 hours to 24 or immediately in response to law enforcement
- Policy: Limited investigative authority of civil law enforcement officers

# Implementation Lessons Learned

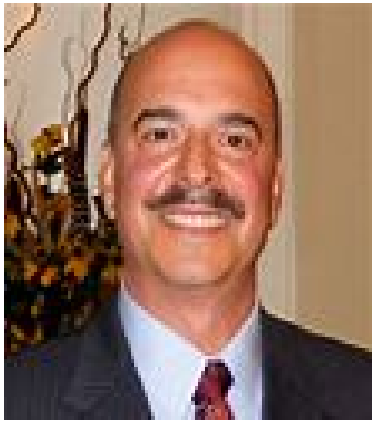
- People: How to Remove Guns
  - WARM approach
    - "Talking people out of their guns"
    - Non-confrontational approach
  - Role of visionary leadership

- People: Unexpected Friends
  - Defense attorneys
  - Judge

# Implementation Lessons Learned


- Environment: similarities between sites
  - Storage challenge
  - Benefits of local expertise on domestic violence and guns
- Environment: differences between sites
  - Level of formality in pursuing change
- Environment was something that could be controlled, and challenges overcome (by people) as opposed to a driving factor.
- Next steps

# Skill Building: Stakeholder Analysis



"You cannot have policy without politics"

- Del Dan K Morhaim
  Maryland House of Delegates, District 11
  Deputy Majority Leader

# Participants in the Policy Process


- Elected officials
- Appointed officials
- Bureaucrats

- Lobbyists
- Advocates
- Researchers

- Constituents

# Why Stakeholder Analysis?

- If we agree that stakeholders are important…
- Then they need to be a part of how we understand policy, strategize about policy, and communicate about policy

# Why Stakeholder Analysis?

## Goals of a Stakeholder Analysis

- Understand who is involved with a policy, their level of commitment to supporting or opposing a policy proposal, their likely influence, and the potential to alter that influence
- Assess the likelihood of success for a policy proposal
- Identify opportunities for compromise
- Inform strategies to increase success of policy goal

# Components of a Stakeholder Analysis

- Differences in Scope
- Basic components
  - Identify stakeholders
  - Describe their interest in the policy
  - Assemble information about their position, influence, resources
  - Analyze the information collected
  - Make recommendations

*Schmeer, K. Guidelines for Conducting a Stakeholder Analysis, Partnerships in Health Reform, Abt Associates, Inc. 1999.*

# Making Recommendations

- Assess the relative importance of different stakeholders, their knowledge about the policy, and the resources they bring to the issue
  - Who do we need to know about and what do we need to know?
- Identify opportunities for maximizing supporters' role and minimizing opponents influence
  - How can we improve the likelihood of support for our policy?
    - Education, compromise, alliances, etc.
- Proposed roles for your organization/client in pursuing the identified opportunities
  - What specifically can we do to advance our position via stakeholders?

# Sample Stakeholder Analysis Table

| Name | Organization or Group | Position (leader) | Power (level) | Position on the issue | Knowledge | Resources (physical, ability to mobilize, etc.) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | |

**LESSON: DO YOUR HOMEWORK!**

# Some Key Resources

- Readings: 3 articles that already sent (Giles-Corti et al., 2015, Colby et al., 2008, Sorian and Baugh, 2002)
- Policy Guide – website for the Johns Hopkins Center for Injury Research and Policy
- Pollack KM, Frattaroli S, Morhaim D. Working in the legislature: Perspectives on injury prevention in the United States. Injury Prevention 2009;15(3):208-211.
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