

HEALTH IN ALL POLICIES BEST AND INNOVATIVE PRACTICES



SUMMARY

Health in All Policies recognizes that health is determined not only by genetics, health care, and individual behaviors but by a complex set of social, economic and environmental factors. HiAP is a collaborative approach to engage all sectors and branches of government to ensure that the potential health consequences are identified and considered during decision-making processes.

THE GOAL OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document draws upon the best practices and innovative approaches in the energy sector that advance positive health outcomes.

The document describes current action in Vermont and outlines approaches for future planning to synergistically meet energy and health goals.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Energy is essential to health and wellbeing; it is necessary for cooking, heat, transport, medical care, and more. Energy efficiency programs such as weatherization of homes and the use of renewable energy are beneficial to the health of all people and their environment.

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Sector - ENERGY

MISSION

To serve all citizens of Vermont through public advocacy, planning, programs, and other actions that meet the public's need for least cost, environmentally sound, efficient, reliable, secure, sustainable, and safe energy, telecommunications, and regulated utility systems in the state for the short and long term.

STRATEGIC GOALS

- 1 Promoting the interest of the general public in the provision of the state's regulated public services -- electricity, natural gas, telephone, cable television, and to a limited degree water and wastewater
- 2 Ensuring that the state's telecommunications infrastructure can support a diversified set of services that address the current and potential needs of the state's residents and business entities
- 3 Protecting the public health and safety and ensuring that safety regulations established by federal and state government for nuclear facilities, natural gas, and certain types of propane installations are met

BUDGET

The Department's operations include Regulated Utility Planning, Efficiency & Energy Resources, Engineering, Telecommunications & Connectivity, Public Advocacy, and Consumer Affairs & Public Information. These are primarily supported by the gross revenue tax on utility bills. The Department houses the Clean Energy Development Fund with no current dedicated funding source. Opportunities within the current scope and scale of the Department's budget to promote health, include:

- The Clean Energy Development Fund has budgeted its remaining funds to support advanced wood heating systems for residential, commercial, and nonprofit institutional entities.
- The Department's Building Energy Standards, in both the residential and commercial sectors, set minimum efficiency requirements for new and renovated buildings. The standards are designed to provide more reductions in energy use and emissions over the life of a building when compared with a similar building constructed prior to the standards going into effect. They also can promote certain types of fuels that have an impact on building owners' health and comfort.
- The Department oversees the budgets and performance of the state's energy efficiency utilities, which are working to help weatherize existing homes and businesses, facilitate the deployment of highly efficient new structures, and decrease the use of electricity and fossil fuels.
- The Department continues disbursing funds to assist regions and municipalities with implementation of Act 174 enhanced energy planning, wherein regions and municipalities assess their energy use, set goals for reducing energy usage and increasing the share of that energy provided by renewables, determine pathways to meet their goals, and map potential and unsuitable areas for clean and renewable energy projects.

With additional funding, the following actions could be taken to promote health:

- The Clean Energy Development Fund could again offer grants, loans, and incentives to support renewable energy systems, including support to the popular wood stove changeout program which helps upgrade older wood stoves and boilers.
- The Department could work with the Department of Health to develop and implement health impact assessments for energy projects.

POLICY

The Department advocates for policies by participating in proceedings before the Vermont Public Utility Commission regarding energy project proposals. As a party, the Department analyzes, recommends, and litigates in support of projects that reflect the state of the science and meet statutory criteria. Issues the Department examines in this context include safe blasting procedures, noise levels, and electromagnetic fields.

The Department also recommends that (1) underground lines be owned by a member of Dig Safe to prevent a person from digging into an electrical line and (2) that all projects comply with the electrical code to prevent injury. The Department also inspects natural gas and certain propane pipelines for compliance with regulatory rules and safety standards.

If an issue requires expertise on a health impact, the Department will contact the Department of Health to suggest it join the proceeding. Other sister agencies examine other issues with health implications, such as air purity, water purity, and greenhouse gas impacts.

The policies below are contained within the Department's 2016 Comprehensive Energy Plan that were developed in collaboration with the Department of Health. The Plan contains "guiding economic, environmental, and health goals." It seeks to balance these sometimes competing or conflicting goals and prioritize actions that positively affect all the goals.", The items below reflect the priorities related to health when developing or evaluating energy policies.

POLICY - CONTD.

<p>OVERALL</p>	<p>Collaborate with other state agencies including Health in the development of the Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan (CEP) and Electric Plan (required through by 30 V.S.A. §202b and 30 V.S.A. §202 respectively) to ensure health goals are considered in the plans, as well as in the Department of Building & General Service’s overall—and each agency’s individual—State Agency Energy Plan.</p> <hr/> <p>Work with the Department of Health to implement the policy goals in the State energy plan for health.</p>
<p>ACTIVE LIVING</p>	<p>Encourage active lifestyles and reduced energy use through compact development, and by providing safe opportunities for walking, biking, and using public transit.</p> <hr/> <p>Promote the development of complete streets and safe and efficient pedestrian, biking and transit networks to reduce the amount of energy used for transportation.</p>
<p>AIR QUALITY</p>	<p>Improve outdoor air quality by reducing emissions from transportation, home and business heating and energy usage, and energy production.</p> <hr/> <p>Provide incentives and promote the use of cleaner energy sources (e.g., solar and wind) that reduce negative impacts on respiratory health</p> <hr/> <p>Improve energy efficiency, foster cleaner fuels, shift to cleaner transportation technologies (e.g., electric/hybrid vehicles),</p> <hr/> <p>Change behaviors – reduce personal vehicular travel, increase transit/biking/pedestrian travel, support telecommuting – to ease air pollution and improve overall air quality.</p>
<p>INDOOR ENVIRONMENT</p>	<p>Improve building weatherization and the use of advanced heating and ventilation technologies to improve the health and comfort of the indoor environment and reduce energy bills.</p> <hr/> <p>Promote the use of advanced wood-burning stoves and boilers to improve home-heating efficiency and reduce the detrimental impacts of wood burning on indoor and outdoor air quality, especially in areas with at-risk populations.</p>
<p>CLIMATE CHANGE</p>	<p>Consider the negative impacts of climate change on health when developing energy policies.</p> <hr/> <p>Ensure the use of strategies to improve the efficiency of heating and cooling systems and reduce the need for heating and cooling with appropriate building, landscape, and community design.</p> <hr/> <p>Foster environments that promote active transportation (walking, biking, transit) and mitigate greenhouse gas emissions.</p> <hr/> <p>Continually seek and promote alternative clean and renewable energy projects and the use of clean energy.</p>
<p>HEALTH EQUITY</p>	<p>Assess the health impacts of the energy system to avoid or mitigate potential negative impacts, especially for the most vulnerable population groups such as the elderly, low-income households, and those with chronic or pre-existing medical conditions.</p> <hr/> <p>Ensure the continuity of energy services—particularly space heating and cooling, food refrigeration, and emergency services—for those most vulnerable.</p>

PROGRAM

The Department has limited direct involvement in program administration, though it is involved in program oversight discussed in the Budget section above (oversight of efficiency utility budgets and programs, limited remaining Clean Energy Development Fund rebate programs for advanced wood heating systems).

The Department is more likely to be involved in development of programs related to energy that are overseen and administered by others, some of whom will be incorporating health in their policies more directly through this HiAP initiative. In the instances where that is not the case, the Department can facilitate the involvement of the Department of Health in development or enhancements to programs to better reflect Vermonters' health as a key priority.

Some opportunities to elevate health as a priority include:

- Promote delivery of services that improve energy efficiency and healthy housing in tandem.
- Promote, coordinate and deliver (when funding is available) wood stove change-out programs and guidance on healthy and efficient wood burning practices.
- Collaborate with the Health Department and Agency of Natural Resources to communicate the health benefits of clean energy technologies.
- Work with the Department of Health to develop and implement measures to help track and evaluate how energy policies and decisions are impacting health, especially for those most vulnerable.
- Prepare for increased energy demands due to the warming climate and extreme weather conditions. Consider mitigation strategies such as modifying building design and energy system standards, promoting heat pump installs in lieu of air conditioners, and promoting urban heat island mitigation strategies.
- Work with partners to support programs that address challenges related to improving energy efficiency in older buildings, including hazards from lead and vermiculite insulation.
- Ensure consideration of the health impact of energy usage when evaluating energy program benefits, particularly when programs are delivered to those most vulnerable.