Good afternoon and welcome to today's Coffee Break presented by the Evaluation and Program Effectiveness Team in the Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention at CDC. We are very fortunate today to have Eileen Chappelle and Joanna Wooster (Elmi) as today's presenters. Eileen and Joanna are from CDC's Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention and are Health Scientists on the Evaluation Team.

*Note: Screen magnification settings may affect document appearance.

Disclaimer: The information presented here is for training purposes and reflects the views of the presenters. It does not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The information presented here is for training purposes only and reflects the views of the presenter. It doesn't necessarily represent the official position of the CDC. So with that we'll go ahead and get started. Joanna, the floor is yours.

I'll start us off today with a brief summary of how policy change is increasingly promoted as a strategy to achieve public health goals and reasons for evaluating this strategy. We'll then look at the various phases along the policy lifecycle that provide opportunities for evaluation.

And for the purposes of today's presentation, we'll hone in on what to evaluate once the policy is enacted. Eileen will share three possible approaches to evaluating an implemented policy and we'll wrap up with general considerations, useful resources, and question and answers.

Policy change is an evidence-based strategy, based on the socio-ecological model. This population-level approach can reach a broader segment of society and can change the environment to make peoples default choice the healthy choice.

Policies have a much greater reach and impact than, say, an individual-level intervention, can require less effort and resources to implement, and are overall more sustainable. Policies bring about lasting changes—both in terms of changing the social environment and reducing chances of individual behavior relapse.

For these reasons, policy change is encouraged as a strategy to prevent chronic disease. This is evident in current funding opportunities and guidance from leading public health agencies, for example, CDC's Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention current FOA requirements for Health Departments to carry out policy, systems, and environmental change strategies, and the release of the Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention outcome indicators for policy and systems change.

Reasons To Evaluate Policy

- **Inform and improve implementation**
  - Assess progress toward desired goal
  - What's working and areas for improvement
- **Measure results and effectiveness**
  - Identify and share successes
  - Accountability
- **Contribute to knowledge and practice base**

With a greater emphasis on policy change to improve health, naturally there's a growing interest in evaluating this particular strategy. One may want to assess what progress is being made toward reaching the intended goal. Or you may want to identify strengths or opportunities for improvement to help further enhance the policy. And of course, it's important to show the results and impact of the policy to funders and other stakeholders.

In your work, you probably found a dearth of information in the area of evaluating policy. Unlike program evaluation, there are limited proven or recommended evaluation frameworks or "best practices" specifically for policy evaluation. As we conduct more evaluations of policy and share our learnings, we can further contribute to the knowledge and practice base.

Policy Phases To Evaluate

Policy Evaluation

- Agenda Setting
- Policy Formulation
- Policy Adoption & Enactment
- *Policy Implementation
- Policy Enforcement
- *Policy Outcome & Impact
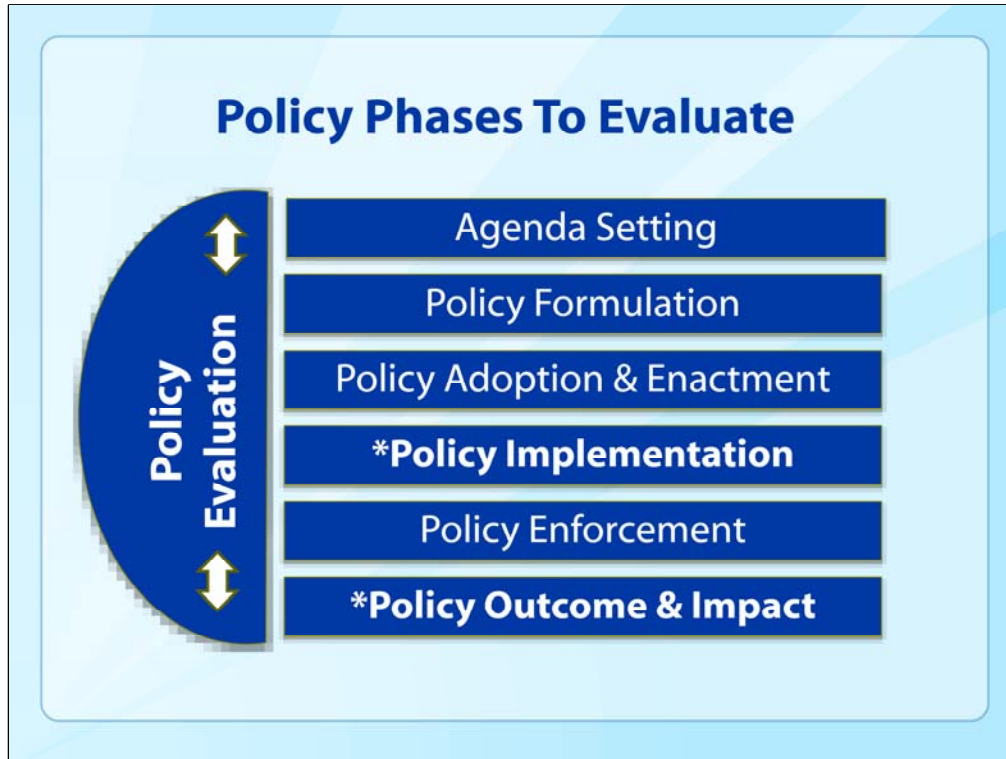
The six different phases of the policy lifecycle each provide an opportunity to conduct evaluation and explore particular questions of interest. For example, when setting the agenda, stakeholders might want to assess "What are the existing policy gaps?" During the phase of policy formulation questions such as "What is the nature of the problem to be addressed?" and "Is there preemption?" may need to be answered.

Once the policy is implemented, it's necessary to evaluate to what extent the policy was implemented as planned. And to show outcomes and impact, it's critical to assess what happened as a result of the policy (both expected and unexpected results).

For the rest of the presentation we'll focus on policy implementation and outcome and impact. We want to put in a plug for a future Coffee Break in 2012 on how to use evaluative thinking to support policy development and evaluation.

Policy Implementation
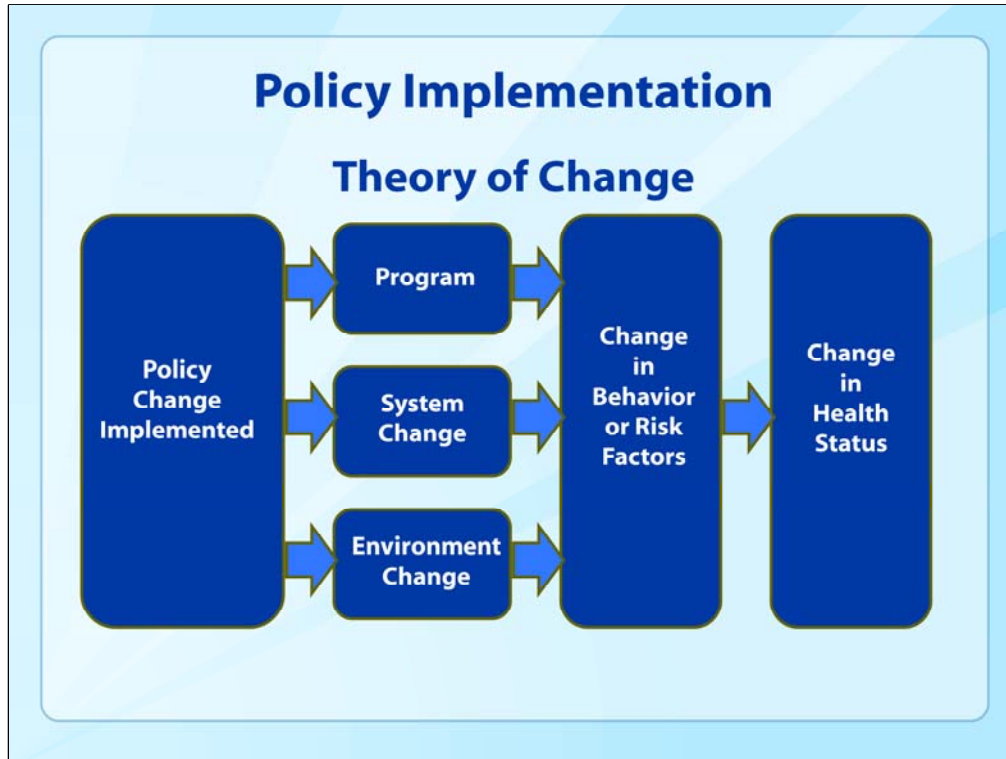
Theory of Change

Before moving on, it's important to share our theory of change and assumptions for how policy change can lead to improved health. In public health and chronic disease prevention, we often see that a new policy leads to some type of output such as the creation or development of a new program, a systems change, or an environmental change. These represent different ways that a policy can be expressed or translated into action. Expected outcomes may include knowledge, attitude, or behavior changes among the population reached or changes in risk factors, leading to an overall change in health status. This model helps us to see how using tools and approaches for program evaluation can be adapted to assess policies as well.

So with this context, Eileen will describe three evaluation approaches for a particular heart disease-related policy intervention.
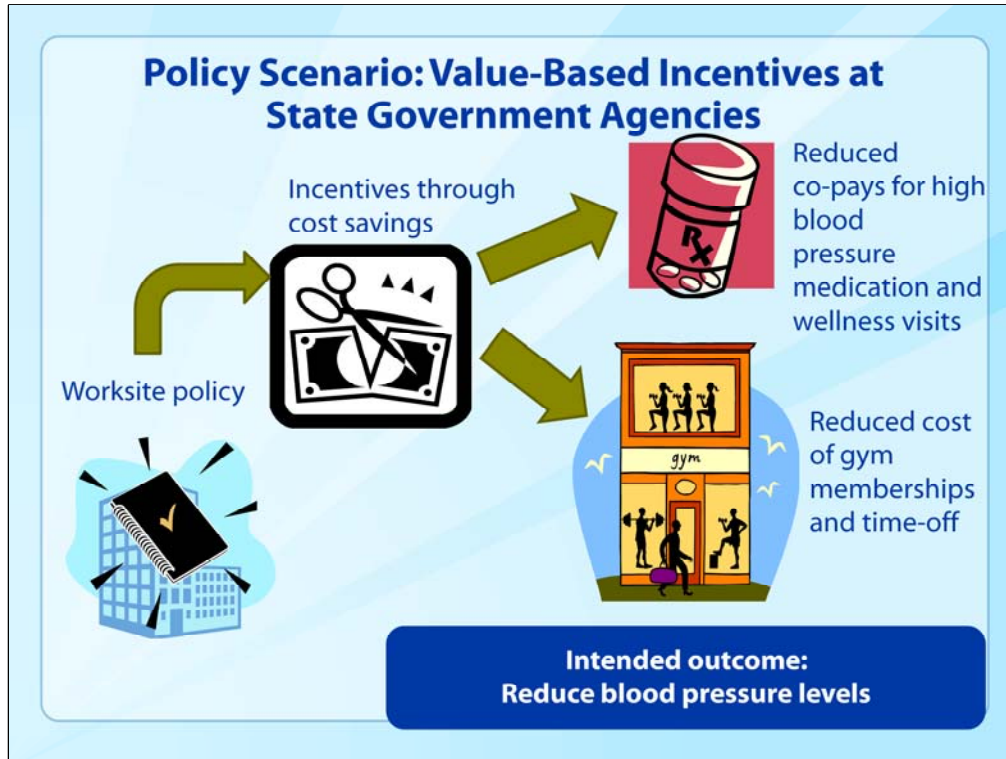
There are many types of policy: legislative, regulatory, authority, and procedural.

Let's use this example for the rest of this presentation, which is a compilation of different features of value-based incentives policies. Here is an example of a policy that helps increase access for services that may help improve cardiovascular health.

The policy states: "State X government agencies may establish, within the limits of appropriations available, a worksite wellness program which offers the following:
• Reduced co-pays for hypertension medications and wellness visits
• Reduced memberships fees or dues to local participating fitness centers or gyms
• Provide additional time off to exercise during the day with supervisor approval."

As with program evaluation, you want to gain an understanding of what the policy is.

Defining the Purpose of the Policy Evaluation

❑ Engage your stakeholders from the beginning.
❑ Be clear about what aspects of the policy will be evaluated.
❑ Define your key evaluation questions.
❑ Determine how the results will be used.

Potential Stakeholders
State government employers, employees, funders, health benefits coordinators, and managers at different sites across multiple agencies in the state government

Thinking about what policy stage you are evaluating and what particular aspects you want to evaluate will also help you stay focused with your evaluation.

Let's think about our value-based incentives example. It provides reduced costs for wellness visits, medication, and gym membership, as well as time off for employees to exercise. I may be just interested in exploring the gym membership part of the policy to determine if this is a real incentive for the state employees.

On potential key evaluation question may be: To what extent do reduced gym memberships encourage employees to increase their physical activity?

I may use the evaluation results to determine if the provision of gym memberships should continue, or if another incentive would encourage employees to participate. For example, having an additional day off after logging in X number of hours of exercise.

A different evaluation question may be, which of these incentives do employees take advantage of more?

Tailoring Evaluation Approach to Your Focus

Type of Evaluation	Policy Stage and Key Questions
Process Evaluation	**Policy Implementation/Enforcement** • To what extent was the policy implemented as expected? • What challenges were addressed during implementation of the policy?
Outcome Evaluation	**Policy Outcome/Impact** • What health outcomes were achieved by the policy? • Were there any unexpected outcomes?

Let's expand on possible evaluation questions. Let's keep within the realm of policy implementation and policy outcomes.

With implementation, think about which locations need to have the policy in place. Are there different dates of implementation?

Categories of key evaluation questions include:
- Implementation—To what extent was the policy implemented at the worksites as expected?
- Replication of the policy in multi-sites—What are the key features of the policy that need to be in place in order to expand to other sites? In this example, negotiations with local insurance providers and gyms.
- Health outcomes—Are more employees reporting that their blood pressure is under control (under 140/90)?
- Unintended consequences—Are you seeing a reduction in absenteeism?

Keeping our sample policy in mind, let's look at the various ways it may be evaluated.

How Is the Policy Being Implemented in All the State Government Worksites?

❑ Observational study/site visits
❑ Employee health benefits review
❑ Standard operating procedures
❑ Key informant Interviews with the office managers

Implementation Fidelity

State government has several agencies. This sample policy may be implemented in the health department first before expanding to other part of the state government.

Learning about the early adopters' experience implementing the policy may help expand the implementation of the policy or vary the way to promote the incentives to the employees.

How would you explore implementation fidelity of the policy?
- Conduct a site visit to the worksite and look for any evidence about the policy. For example, promotional materials for the incentives.
- Review the employee health benefits to see if wellness visits are free or have a reduced copay.
- Conduct interviews with office managers to learn more about how staff are oriented to incentives, or to determine what agreements have been to make the policy possible with health insurance companies or local gyms.

Is the policy now part of the standard operating procedures across the state government worksites? Is the policy in place for employees of the Division of Public Health as well as the Department of Transportation?

To What Extent Are Employees Participating in the Value-Based Incentives Program Authorized by the Worksite Policy?

❑ Review of employee orientation materials
❑ Tracking of new gym memberships by employees since inception of the policy
❑ Employee survey
❑ Focus groups with employees

Employee Experience with Employers' Incentives

Looking at short term outcomes:
- Are employees aware of the incentives?
- Are the incentives the right ones to motivate employees to increase medication adherence or participation in a gym?
- Are employees tracking their exercise time?
- Are employees taking advantage of these benefits?

How Effective Is the Policy?

- Compare the rates of hypertension before and after the policy is implemented
- Explore other outcomes such as the reduction in absenteeism
- Natural study (comparing health outcomes of government agencies within state)
- Environmental scan (context of policy implementation)
- Economic analysis (ROI)

Policy Impact

To determine the effectiveness of the policy, you want to conduct a survey with employees before the policy is in place. Be aware of the start time of the policy implemented. Obtaining baseline information is critical for determining effectiveness. Then you will want to conduct surveys with employees on regular intervals potentially every 6 months to determine if their hypertension is under control.

Negotiate access to health outcome information with the employees that are taking advantage of the value-based incentives. To get a better understanding of the policy context, you may also conduct an environmental scan to learn if other efforts are supporting or conflicting with the policy. For example, a new fitness center may be opened on the state government campus that is free to all employees. This may cause employees to not participate in the reduced gym memberships since they have access to a free gym.

When looking at the impact of a policy, there are several angles that can be taken into consideration. You can look at the impact on the employer, employees, or the community (i.e., the local fitness centers). When looking at the impact on the employer, it could be on health behavior (i.e., increase physical activity), health outcomes (i.e., reduction of mean blood pressure rates), or costs (i.e., reductions in health claims costs over time).

As you design your evaluation, think about how to triangulate your date collection methods. Obtaining information from multiple sources: the employees, employers, and a third party observer may help provide stronger evidence to determine impact of the policy.

Policy Evaluation Considerations

❑ Obtain baseline data before the policy is implemented.
❑ Use appropriate and sensitive measures.
❑ Share and use the evaluation results to improve policy implementation and decision making as well as highlight accomplishments.
❑ Remember the dynamic nature of policy.
❑ Consider the environmental context of the policy: political, financial, and personnel.
❑ Consider policy contribution to health impact.

In conclusion, I just want to highlight some considerations.

Similar to defining your program, it is important to determine the starting point of your policy. It is difficult to describe the impact of the policy without having a baseline. However, it can be done.

It is important to secure access to data and capture your baseline. After you have analyzed your data, don't forget to go back to a few stakeholders to get their buy-in and their help in interpreting the results.

Encourage and promote the use of the results. Be timely in the use of the information. Again, the policy environment is very dynamic. New policies are passed frequently which may have an impact on the policy you are evaluating.

Keep the environmental context in mind. Make sure a policy is implemented and in place before exploring health impact. Also think about the time needed after implementation before you can expect to see changes.

If a policy is successful, it will be sustainable. Our hope is that evaluation may determine good policies which may help create a healthier environment for people to live, work, and play.

Resources

- **Evaluation Toolkit for Smoke-free Policies**
  - www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/secondhand_smoke/evaluation_toolkit/pdfs/evaluation_toolkit.pdf
- **A Guide To Measuring Advocacy and Policy and Handbook of Data Collection Tools**
  - www.aecf.org/upload/publicationfiles/DA3622H5000.pdf
  - www.organizationalresearch.com/publications/a_handbook_of_data_collection_tools.pdf
- **CDC CHANGE Tool**
  - www.cdc.gov/healthycommunitiesprogram/tools/change.htm
- **Heart Disease and Stroke—2009–2010 Update of State Legislative Policy Options**
  - www.ncsl.org/IssuesResearch/Health/HeartDiseaseandStroke2009ofLegislativePol/tabid/19708/Default.aspx

Here are a few resources. Although the first resource is from the Office on Smoking and Health, it is still a useful guide.

The second resource from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, targeted to grant makers, offers a framework for identifying outcomes and evaluation designs for policy change. The companion guide from Organizational Research Services compiles examples tools to measure advocacy and policy efforts.

CDC's CHANGE Tool is a community assessment data collection tool for monitoring and evaluating policy and environmental changes in areas of nutrition, physical activity, tobacco, chronic disease management, and leadership across five sectors.

Lastly, if you want to see examples of other policies that are in place related heart disease and stroke, please review the last resource.

Do we have to evaluate all phases of a policy?

Of course, ideally, we would like to evaluate across all phases of the policy. Assessing the need or level of support for the policy during the development and adoption phases will lead to a stronger more effective policy, leading to better implementation and outcomes. So doing that work at the beginning will of course pay off in the end. However, in reality, with limited resources you may have to pick a certain phase in the lifecycle to evaluate. Sit down with your stakeholders, assess and prioritize which phase would benefit the most from the evaluation, and provide the most important evaluation.

Thank You

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