

Collaboration between Public Health and Planning officials is essential to communities so that health goals can be optimized in our living and work environments.

Common questions about public health and planning collaboration

1. In what ways does the environment impact our health?

The environments in which we live have a profound impact on our health. They influence our exposure to pollutants and crime as well as access to healthy foods and spaces for physical activity. Environmental factors, such as social capital, also influence mental health.

2. What are the benefits of collaboration between public health and planning officials?

Because planners help design the world in which we live, they have an opportunity to influence public health. When public health and planning officials collaborate, they are able to use techniques from each discipline to build healthier communities.

3. What are characteristics of successful collaboration between public health and planning officials?

Collaboration between public health and planning officials is most successful when they advocate for change in multiple contexts, explain differences in terminology for each discipline so both are on the same page and provide data to support their findings.

How to use this information in your organization

Step 1: Brainstorm with officials from both disciplines on ways health goals can be incorporated into planning efforts.

Step 2: Identify differences and similarities in how the issue is broached by both disciplines. Identify common ground to be used in the process.

Step 3: Proactively advocate for health changes in multiple contexts, such as public and private spaces. Foster relationships with policy makers and leaders in other organizations to promote this change.

This white paper was developed through information gained from the Design for Health workshop, presented by Dr. Ann Forsyth and Dr. Marya Morris.