

What Is ‘Policy, Systems and Environmental Change’? ¹

Policy, systems and environmental change is a new way of thinking about how to effectively improve health in a community. For many years, health programs have focused on individual behavior, assuming that if you teach people what will make them healthy, they will find a way to do it. Unfortunately, being healthy is not just about individual choices. Today, we’re realizing that it’s not enough to know how to be healthy – you need practical, readily available healthy options around you. That’s where policy, systems and environmental change comes in.

What Is Policy, Systems and Environmental Change?

Policy, systems and environmental change is a way of modifying the environment to make healthy choices practical and available to all community members. By changing laws and shaping physical landscapes, a big impact can be made with little time and resources. By changing policies, systems and/or environments, communities can help tackle health issues like obesity, diabetes, cancer and other chronic diseases.

Why is Policy, Systems and Environmental Change Important?

Where you live affects how you live - you simply can’t make healthy decisions if healthy options aren’t available to you. Policy, systems and environmental change makes healthier choices a real, feasible option for every community member by looking at the laws, rules and environments that impact our behavior.

PSE Change versus Behavior Change

	Healthy Eating	Active Living	Tobacco-free Living	Access to Care
Behavior Changes	Educate students on good nutrition	Hold a community Zumba class	Encourage people to quit smoking	Encourage regular doctor visits
PSE Approaches	Implement healthy vending policies at worksites	Open school playgrounds, fields and tracks to the community after hours	Insurance discount for employees that are non-smokers	Share data to track trends and identify high needs patients
	Stock local corner stores located in low supermarket access areas with fresh produce	Reduce the cost of bike share for individuals on AHCCCS	Implement policies that support tobacco – free environments (parks, housing, cars)	Provide transportation to clinic visits