INTRODUCTION TO PUBLIC POLICY -101

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WHAT IS PUBLIC POLICY?

“What is public policy?

Public policies are authoritative decisions that are made in the legislative, executive or judicial branches of government. These decisions are intended to direct or influence the actions, behaviors or decisions of others.”

-B B Longest Jr, Health Policymaking in the United States, 1998
NOT ALL POLICIES ARE PUBLIC POLICIES

- **Public policies**
- **Organizational policies** – policies impacting behavior within an organization. Ex: policies on prior approvals before ordering tests.
- **Professional policies** – policies guiding professional behavior. Ex: best practices for treating a disease
- **Macro policies** – overarching policies affecting many areas of public policy. Ex: a balanced budget amendment forcing zero growth in all policy areas, one of which is health.

We will limit our discussion to public policies.
WHAT MAKES AN ISSUE A “PUBLIC” POLICY ISSUE?

• **Private problems** – perceived to be the responsibility of the parties involved.

• **Public problems** – entail some kind of substantial social or individual difficulty that cannot easily be addressed by the parties or that should not be ignored by society.

Is health insurance coverage a public or a private policy issue?
HOW DO HEALTH CARE POLICIES IMPACT HEALTH?
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HEALTH POLICIES

IMPACT

DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

THAT

IMPACT

HEALTH
PUBLIC POLICY INTERVENTIONS
WHAT GOVERNMENTS CAN DO –
THE POLICY TOOLS INCLUDE

- Regulate
- Subsidize
- Ration
- Tax and spend
- Contract out
- Use market incentives

- Privatize
- Charge fees
- Educate
- Create public trusts
- Conduct research

WITH DIFFERING POLITICAL BASES,
COERCIVENESS & EFFECTIVENESS.
HOW IS PUBLIC POLICY MADE?
STEPS IN PUBLIC POLICY MAKING

• PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION
• AGENDA SETTING
• POLICY FORMULATION
• POLICY ADOPTION
• POLICY IMPLEMENTATION
• POLICY EVALUATION
• POLICY TERMINATION OR CHANGE

… IN AN IDEALIZED WORLD
PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION: THE PROBLEM MUST BE "ACTIONABLE"
DEVELOPING A DIAGNOSTIC TREE …

HIGH MATERNAL MORTALITY

• UNHEALTHY BEHAVIORS
• INADEQUATE HEALTH CARE
• POOR SOCIOECONOMIC CONDITIONS
DEVELOPING A DIAGNOSTIC TREE …

• UNHEALTHY BEHAVIORS
• INADEQUATE HEALTH CARE
✓ POOR SOCIOECONOMIC CONDITIONS

• LOW EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT
• LOW AVERAGE WAGE IN REGION
DEVELOPING A DIAGNOSTIC TREE …

✓ LOW EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT
  • LOW AVERAGE WAGE IN REGION

LACK OF TECHNICAL EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

ACTIONABLE
AGENDA SETTING: HOW DOES AN ISSUE GET ON THE POLITICAL AGENDA?

- **THE RECOGNITION** THAT AN ISSUE IS A SIGNIFICANT PUBLIC PROBLEM
- **DEVELOPMENT OF PROPOSALS FOR POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS** TO THE PROBLEM
- **APPROPRIATE POLITICAL CIRCUMSTANCES**
  - PUBLIC ATTITUDES
  - INTEREST GROUP ATTITUDES
  - LEADERSHIP ATTITUDES (“Policy Entrepreneurs”)
  - RELATED/COMPETING AGENDA ITEMS

“POLICY WITHOUT POLITICS IS LIKE ARCHITECTURE WITHOUT ENGINEERING”
AGENDA SETTING…
THE WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY
MODEL

THREE STREAMS
Problems
Possible
Solutions
Political
Circumstances

DEVELOPMENT
OF
LEGISLATION

WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY
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COUPLING OF STREAMS -- WHEN ALL THREE CRITERIA ARE MET, A PROBLEM CAN PASS THOUGH A WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY
STEPS IN IMPACTING HEALTH
LOGIC MODEL OF THE IMPACT OF SCHIP ON CHILD HEALTH

PROBLEM

Uninsured low-income children

INTERVENTION

SCHIP provides insurance to low-income uninsured and low-income children

Families aware of program; states provide aide in enrollment

Eligible children enroll

Enrollees receive needed care

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

Health status of enrolled children improves

Proposed path

SCHIP = State Children’s Health Insurance Program
Uninsured low-income children

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SCHIP = State Children’s Health Insurance Program
YOUR CHALLENGE …

- Select a childhood health condition
- Identify the social determinants of that condition
- Identify a problem that is an actionable, public policy issue
- Propose a public policy “solution” to the issue that can get to the political agenda
MCDONALD’S-ISRAEL CEO Omri Padan says their burgers are now ‘healthful and tasty.’ (Courtesy)