Introduction to Health Policy

PHC 6102
Principles of Health Policy and Management
Objectives

• Define policy competence
• Define public policy and health policy
• Identify the roles of the 3 branches of government in policymaking
• Identify and compare forms of health policy
• Explore factors influencing health policy in the US
The Role & Importance of Policy Competence in the Pursuit of Health

“Many public health practitioners fear getting involve with the policy world. There is no question that public health practice is valuable and fulfilling when the task is to gather data, issue reports, and find solutions that modify individual behavior. However, if the nation is ever to achieve optimal population health, then the public health dialogue must include the policy dimension. To advance the health of the population, the public health system must train a work force capable of, and ready to embrace, policy leadership as the inherent and critical element of the profession”.

What is Policy Competence?

• Abilities to analyze the impact of public policies on one’s domain of interest or responsibility and exert influence in the public policymaking process.
  – Understand the policymaking process as a decision-making process
  – Understand a particular type of decision making include context, participants, and processes
EXHIBIT 1.7
The Intertwined Relationships Among Policy Formulation, Implementation, and Modification
What is Public Policy?

“Authoritative decisions made in the
– Legislative (Congressional),
– Executive (Presidential), or
– Judicial branches of government (Supreme Court)
that are intended to direct or influence the actions, behaviors, or decisions of others”.

EXHIBIT 1.1
Roles of Three Branches of Government in Making Policies

Legislative Branch Formulates Policy
- Enacts laws
- Creates and funds health programs
- Balances health policy with other policy domains

Executive Branch Implements Policy
- Approves or vetoes legislation
- Promulgates rules and regulations

Judicial Branch Interprets Policy
- Interprets Constitutional and statutory law
- Develops body of case law
- Preserves rights
- Resolves disputes

Policies are authoritative decisions made within government
So, What is Health Policy?

• Health policies are public policies that pertain to or influence the pursuit of health.
• Health policies are authoritative decisions made within government that are intended to direct or influence the actions, behaviors, or decisions of others pertaining to health and its determinants.
Different Forms of Health Policies

• Health policies can affect groups or classes of individuals, such as physicians, the poor, elderly and children

OR

• Types or category of organizations, such as medical schools, HMOs, nursing homes, pharmaceutical companies, and employers.
Forms of Health Policies

• Laws
  – 2010 Affordable Care Act (ACA)
  – 1965 Medicare and Medicaid Law

• Rules and Regulations

• Operational Decisions
  – Determining eligibility for Medicare & Medicaid

• Judicial Decisions
  – The U.S. Supreme Court’s ruling in 2012 to uphold the (ACA)
Categories of Health Policies

• Regulatory
  – Call on government to prescribe and control the behavior of a target group by monitoring the group and imposing sanctions if it fails to comply
    • E.g., the government’s control of the rates at which it reimburses hospitals for care provided to Medicare patients

• Allocative
  – Involves the direct provision of income, services or goods to a group of individuals or organizations
    – E.g., continuation of health insurance coverage for unemployed workers in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009
EXHIBIT 1.4 The Impact of Policy on Health Determinants and Health

Health Policy → Health Determinants → Health

Health Determinants:
- Physical environment
- Behavior and biology
- Social factors
- Health services
Principle Features of US Health Policy

1. Government as subsidiary to the private sector
2. Its fragmented, incremental, piece-meal reform
3. Pluralistic and special interest group politics
4. Decentralized role for the states
5. Impacted by presidential leadership
1. Government as Subsidiary to the Private Sector

- Healthcare is not seen as a right of citizenship or primary responsibility of gov’t
- Americans prefer market solutions over gov’t intervention
  - Private sector plays a dominant role
- Government responds to most-cited problems
- Government spending confirmed to filing gaps in private sector
2. Fragmented, Incremental, and Piece-meal reform

• Mix of gov’t and private insurance give rise to a complex & fragmented system of health care financing in which:
  – Employed are insured by voluntary insurance through employee and employer contributions
  – Elderly are financed through Social Security tax revenues
  – The poor are insured through federal, state, and local revenue
  – Special populations (Veterans, Native Americans) insured directly by the federal gov’t
3. Pluralistic and Interest Group Politics

• Role of interest groups and incremental policies result from compromises designed to satisfy demands of
  – Interest groups (e.g., AMA, AARP, AHA)
  – Employers
  – Consumer groups
  – Manufacturers of Technology
  – Alliances (diverse interest groups form alliances among themselves & members of legislative body)
4. Decentralized Role of the States

• Most incremental policy actions originate at the state level
  – State finance much of the health care for the poor and disabled (e.g., Medicaid, SCHIP)
  – Quality assurance & oversight of health care practitioners and facilities
  – Regulate health care costs and insurance carriers
  – Health personnel training
  – Authorization of local gov’t health services
5. Impact of Presidential Leadership

- Americans look to presidential leadership for major changes in health policies
- Presidents can influence outcomes through compromise
  - Lyndon B. Johnson helped pass Medicare & Medicaid
  - Harry Truman helped pass the Hill-Burton Hospital Construction Act
  - Barack Obama helped pass the Affordable Care Act
Summary

• Health policy are authoritative decisions made within gov’t intended to direct or influence the actions, behaviors, or decisions of others pertaining to health and its determinants

• Authoritative decisions are made in legislative executive, and judicial branches of gov’t

• Health policies can take the form of laws, rules and regulations, operational decisions & judicial decisions

• Health policies can be broadly defined as regulatory or allocative

• Health policies are driven by the private sector, piece-meal reform, special interest groups, decentralized role of the states, and presidential leadership
Questions

• What is health policy?
• What forms do health policy take?
• Compare and contrast the two basic categories of health policies.
• Discuss the connection between health policies, health determination, and health.
• What are the principle features of US health policy?
Sources
