

# Introduction to Health Policy Statements



0:01	This short tutorial introduces you to the concept of writing health policy statements.
0:08	Health policy statements respond to specific health problems by describing and analyzing potential policies designed to address these problems.
0:17	Policy statements can vary in length from single-page policy briefs to lengthy multipage policy white papers.
0:24	Shorter statements will typically focus on outlining a single health policy in response to a specific health problem.
0:31	Longer statements, sometimes called “whitepapers,” will outline several potential policies in response to a specific health problem.
0:38	The more complex the health problem is, the more likely a longer policy statement will be required.
0:45	Examples of health policy statements range from position papers on treatment protocols to comprehensive assessments of community health problems and proposed solutions.
0:55	The American Public Health Association publishes health policy statements annually, focusing on current public health topics.
1:03	Those published in 2016 included improving health in low-income neighborhoods, improving health by increasing the minimum wage, and compulsory pasteurization of milk products intended for human consumption.
1:18	Such policy statements may be directed at family practice providers, local, state, or federal policy makers, journalists, or even the general public.
1:28	The audience for the policy statement depends upon what you hope to achieve with the document.
1:33	Who has the power to take action on a policy to address the health concern in question?
1:38	Identifying a target audience for your policy statement is essential for the success of your document.
1:45	Based upon your understanding of the problem you plan to address and your understanding of what will be involved with solving the problem, you need to identify an audience who has the authority to enact the policy you describe.
1:57	Potential audiences may include community leaders, city councils, government agencies, non-government agencies, state legislators, or even federal legislators.
2:08	In any case, you should know who your target audience will be and adjust your style, your choice of evidence, and your content depth to meet the needs of that target audience as you are writing.
2:22	Policy statements are typically broken down into four content areas:
2:26	<b>Problem definition, which answers the question:</b> To what issue or problem does the policy statement respond?



2:33	Define the problem as specifically as possible, describing who it impacts and why your audience should care.
2:39	Your goal in this section is to clearly establish the significance of the problem and to assert that a policy-based solution is needed.
2:48	<b>Policy Description, which answers the question:</b> What specific policy action or actions will effectively address the problem?
2:56	For a shorter statement, limit your focus to one specific policy approach.
3:01	For longer documents, identify and describe multiple policy approaches.
3:06	Again, the length of your statement will depend upon the complexity of the health problem and the audience you address.
3:14	<b>Evidence, which answers the question:</b> What evidence do you have to support your description of both the significance of the problem and the efficacy of the policy or policies you have described?
3:26	You need to make your case that the problem is significant and in need of a solution and that your policy or policies can help solve the problem if enacted.
3:36	You must present research data, preferably quantitative data presented as figures and tables.
3:42	Use narrative explanation to briefly explain the quantitative data.
3:47	<b>Implications, which answers the question:</b> What are the potential consequences of action or inaction?
3:54	Discuss the implications of taking no action on the problem.
3:57	Discuss the implications of taking action.
4:00	What are the pros and cons of inaction and action?
4:04	Remind your readers how your policy or polices address the problem.
4:10	While the specific tone and style you choose to use in your writing will somewhat depend upon who your audience is, in general you should aim for an even-keeled, objective tone – even though you are writing a persuasive document.
4:24	You need to convince your audience of the significance of the problem and the efficacy of the policy or policies you describe for solving that problem, but you should not rely upon an impassioned emotional tone to accomplish these goals.
4:38	Instead rely upon the force of your evidence and logical reasoning to lead your readers to the conclusion that they should act on the policies you describe to solve an important problem.
4:50	The document may be more formal if it is being presented to policymakers or high-ranking decision makers within a healthcare facility, but the format is often flexible.
5:02	On this page, you see links to various policy statements, such as the American Public Health Association’s policy statements discussed previously in the tutorial.
5:11	As you will notice, formats vary, and as noted, length can range from just a single page to a significant work of dozens or even hundreds of pages.

[Displayed on screen](#) Links: Excelsior College Online Writing Lab, Download a Transcript, Tip Sheet, Exemplar, Audience Awareness, Language Choices / Finding Your Voice

