Building Healthy Communities: Reducing Children’s Exposure to Environmental Toxins

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Ensuring a Healthy Environment and Future for All Children: The Need for Urgent Action

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September 6, 2016
Children’s Environmental Health Network

► U.S. National non-profit organization

Our Mission:
To protect the developing child from environmental hazards and to promote a healthy environment

Our Goals:
► Promote & support peer-reviewed research
► Educate and Train
► Promote sound child protective policies
► Better identify opportunities to improve children’s environmental health using a cross-sector approach
Why Focus on Children?

Children are not just “little adults”

- They eat more food, drink more water, and breathe more air than adults
- They crawl on the floor and put things they pick up in their mouths
- All of their systems -- nervous, reproductive, hormonal -- are still growing and developing
- They cannot metabolize toxicants as well as adults
24 Years of Protecting Children’s Health

Chemicals commonly used are not adequately tested for their impact on human health.

Bottom Line: Children are still not as protected as they need to be!
How Are Children Exposed?

- **Ingestion** (what we eat and drink)
  - Food & beverages
  - Soil & dust

- **Inhalation** (what we breathe)
  - Skin absorption, Eye contact
  - Pre-natal exposures
Today’s Emerging Pediatric Health Challenges

- Early onset
- Chronic Illnesses
- Possibly first generation to see a shorter life expectancy than parents due to their poor health status

Genetics
Environment
Child
Nutrition
Social factors
Parenting
Health Care access & quality
Environment
Nutrition
Is The Environment To Blame?

Today’s health concerns are multi-factorial

A child’s environment is one of factors that shapes his/her health, development and future

- Is it the cause of all concerns? No
- Does it play a critical role? Yes
Increase in Environmental Health Concerns

Children’s Health Harms on the Rise, 1975—2011

- Developmental Disabilities: 17% increase overall, ages 3–17 (1997-2008)
- ADHD: 3% increase every year, ages 6–17 (1997-2006)
- Autism: 78% increase, age 8 (2002-2008)
- Childhood Cancers: 25% increased incidence, ages 0–19 (1975-2004)
- Diabetes: 53% increase, ages 0–19 (1990-2011)
Trends in Childhood Asthma Rates

- Over 7 million children under 18 have asthma
- 3rd leading cause of hospitalization of children under 15
- One of the leading causes of school absenteeism
- Racial disparities seen in asthma rates as well: non-Hispanic black children were more likely to be diagnosed (22%) and to still have asthma (16%) than Hispanic (14% and 9%) or non-Hispanic white children (12% and 8%)
Children’s Environmental Health

- Learning disabilities increased 191% between 1977 and 1994

- Autism:
  - Today: 1 in 68 (2014)
  - Up from 1 in 700 children
  - 30-40% of that is better diagnosis
Neurobehavioral Health Effects

Figure 1. Representative drawings of a person by 4-year-old Yaqui children from the valley and foothills of Sonora, Mexico.

Figure 2. Representative drawings of a person by 5-year-old Yaqui children from the valley and foothills of Sonora, Mexico.
Case Study: Freddy Gray’s Life and Lead Poisoning

- African American who grew up in extreme poverty (Baltimore)
- Diagnosed with lead poisoning as an infant due to housing
- Never graduated from high school (special education)
- Arrested more than a dozen times – served two years in jail
Exposures and environments during childhood affect health across the lifespan, and children’s environments are shaped by decisions across sectors.
Eco-Healthy Child Care®

- **A Program That:**
  - Supports child care providers in creating child care settings that are as environmentally healthy as possible;
  - Allows parents to choose child care facilities that are committed to creating a safer, healthier environment for children to learn and grow.

- **How to Get Involved:**
  - EHCC Endorsement: 2-year endorsement granted to providers who comply with at least 24 of 30 best practice techniques.
  - EHCC Train-the-Trainer: a workshop for teachers, trainers, health care professionals, licensing specialists and whoever else is interested in eco-healthy child care practices.
In 2015, CEHN convened a Wingspread Retreat at the Johnson Foundation in Racine, WI.

- Group of visionary leaders came together to create a vision statement and foundation for the *Blueprint for Protecting Children’s Environmental Health: An Urgent Call to Action*

- Various disciplines represented: public health to economics to urban planning to business
Blueprint for Protecting Children

- The next generation must be better off than the last - it is our moral obligation to protect and nurture our children’s health

- Vision of a society that puts children at the center

- Crucial aspects include:
  - Mobilizing greater societal understanding of CEH, with a strong priority on children and families
  - Creating knowledge essential for action and using knowledge we have now
  - Marshaling the engine of the economy to achieve environments where children can thrive
  - Building the political will in our institutions of government for child centered policies
Thank You!

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An alliance to reduce exposure to toxic chemicals during the first 1,000 days of development
Babies Are In Harm’s Way

While tiny brains are forming and growing rapidly during the first 1,000 days, they are being harmed by toxic “brain drain” chemicals all around them.
“Brain drain” chemicals are present in bodies of 90% of pregnant women.
Approximately 1 in 6 children in the U.S. has been diagnosed with a developmental disability.
The result? Babies’ IQ Loss

- 40 million IQ points lost
- 3.4 million more children test as intellectually disabled
- $130 billion/year estimated cost to society
Between 1975 and 2012, the prevalence of children diagnosed with autism has increased from 1 in 5000 to 1 in 68.
A Silent Epidemic

In fact, the exposure to toxic chemicals is so prevalent and the impacts on brain development so widespread and severe that leading doctors and scientists call it a “silent epidemic”.
Healthy Babies Bright Futures

Bright Choices

Science into Action

Bright Cities
Program Fundamentals

Science-based
Data-driven
Delivering Measurable Outcomes
Bright Choices

Armed with key information, families, companies and cities can make homes and environments safer.

Collectively, individual actions drive change.
Bright Cities

Cities taking steps in ten action areas to protect babies from harmful chemicals during the first 1,000 days of development.

Healthy Babies Bright Futures supports those cities with resources and tools to reduce exposure in their communities.
Bright Cities

Focus on key action areas:

- Water
- Housing and indoor air quality
- Construction
- Medical screenings
- Outdoor air quality
- Building codes
- Institutional purchasing
- Food
- Child care regulations
- Parks and playgrounds
Science into Action

- Orchestrated release of consensus statement signed by 50 scientists and medical organizations
- National Call to Action to End Childhood Lead Poisoning in 5 Years
- Lead in Homes Initiative engaging citizen scientists in 10 cities
In 10 years, we will protect millions of children, ensuring that they have the developmental and intellectual ability to prosper and participate in productive communities.

Please join us!
All Children Should Have the Opportunity to Thrive
WHAT WE SUPPORT: OUR GRANTMAKING

GOAL: Educated Kids
Success By Third Grade
Increase the number of children who are reading-and-math proficient by third grade.

GOAL: Healthy Kids
Healthy Birth Weight and Optimal Development
Increase the number of children born at a healthy birth weight and who receive the care and healthy food they need for optimal development.

GOAL: Secure Families
Children and Families at 200% Above Poverty
Increase the number of children and families living at least 200% above the poverty level.

Community & Civic Engagement
Racial Equity
Optimal Child Development
Health In ALL.....  *(Health IS all...)*
Safe Drinking Water
Buffer Zones (from pesticide drift)
Eco-Friendly Childcare
Greening of Schoolyards

Space to Grow
Ready to Leverage & Partner?
Education Facilities Clearing House

– Lead in Drinking Water, Sep. 13, 4:00 pm Eastern
– Towards Healthy Schools: Reducing Risks to Children, Sep. 22, 4:00 pm Eastern

Health and Environmental Funders Network

– Grantmakers' Discussion: Children's Environmental Health, Oct. 26, 1:00 pm Eastern
• More webinars on this topic?
• New topics you want to tackle or learn more about?
• Innovative work that you want to share?
• A question you want to pose to your colleagues?

Contact us at childrenfamilies@gih.org