

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Region 6

Children's Environmental Health Fourth Annual Program Highlights

October 2013-September 2014



Protecting Children Where They Live, Learn, and Play

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Children's Environmental Health

Protecting Children Where They Live, Learn, and Play

...The issue of a clean environment is a matter of public health – and our children are particularly vulnerable to environmental health hazards.

EPA Administrator, Gina McCarthy
American Academy of Pediatrics, August, 2014.

The status of the environmental health of children living in the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Region 6 is serious. Significant poverty issues affect thousands of children who live in Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas, the states that comprise this EPA Region. Children who live in poverty face a greater chance of exposure to harmful chemicals from living in unhealthy environments including poor indoor air conditions from mold, pests, and pesticides, and from outdoor air coming from nearby industrial sites or highways. They also have decreased access to healthy food sources and medical care.

Recently, the poverty rate in the city of Dallas was ranked as one of the highest in the U.S. at 38 percent.¹ According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation, a non-profit organization that tracks the status of children in the U.S., the states that comprise EPA's Region 6, rank among the worse in the nation. The Foundation ranked economic well-being, education, health, and family and community, Region 6 states *overall rankings* are some of the lowest in the country.²



Arkansas	41
Louisiana	47
New Mexico	49
Oklahoma	39
Texas	43



Health disparities are especially significant in both rural and urban communities across the Region. *Colonias*, or unincorporated towns along the U.S. Mexico Border often don't have access to clean water or electricity. Poor urban neighborhoods may sit next to high traffic areas or industrial facilities or along unpaved roads. Children in these communities may live in older homes where lead paint is an issue.

EPA is addressing environmental health disparities by providing support to universities, states, and non-profit organizations so that they may reach those populations most in need of improving children's environmental health.

¹ Mayor's Task Force on Poverty, Council Briefing, August 20, 2014. Rankings are based on analyses of 9 cities with 2012 estimated population of 1 million or more.

² <http://www.aecf.org/resources/the-2014-kids-count-data-book/>

Children's Environmental Health

Protecting Children Where They Live, Learn, and Play

EPA's Children's Environmental Health (CEH) Program was established in 1997 by **Executive Order 13045; Protection of Children from Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks**. The order requires Federal Agencies to assign a high priority to addressing health and safety risks to children, coordinate research priorities on children's health, and ensure that their standards take into account special risks to children.

At EPA, Administrator McCarthy has established several work themes. Children's environmental health initiatives fall under the theme of ***Making a Visible Difference in Communities***.

EPA must work each and every day – hand-in-hand with other federal agencies, states, tribes and local communities – to improve the health of American families and protect the environment one community at a time, all across the country. We must expand the work we do to enhance the livability and economy, vitality of neighborhoods in and around brownfields sites; strengthen our relationship with America's agricultural community; support green infrastructure to manage urban waters; reduce air pollution along roadways, railways and at ports; and take into consideration the impacts of our decisions on environmental justice communities through increased analysis, better science, and enhanced community engagement to ensure the protection of basic fundamental rights.

In Region 6, CEH activities are focused on education and prevention initiatives, regulations, guidance, and outreach to targeted audiences. Regional staff provide technical expertise, participate on national workgroups, and oversee funding opportunities with partner organizations that carryout CEH projects. These efforts provide parents, teachers, child care providers, doctors, nurses, and regulated entities with the tools they need to protect children where they live, learn, and play.

The *Children's Environmental Health Annual Program Highlights* provides details on Regional activities from October 2013 to September 2014.

There are over 10 million children under the age of 18 in Region 6.

Summary of Region 6 Successes

411

City code inspectors, city attorneys, hospital emergency staff, social workers, respiratory therapists, and community health workers were trained in Healthy Homes. Region 6 reached a milestone in FY14, training over 1,000 people in Healthy Homes since 2011.

135

People trained via an online Healthy Homes training course.

588

Health care providers trained in the education and management of environmental asthma triggers.

155

Families performed an in-home environmental assessment.

1,553

Families and their children were trained in controlling environmental asthma triggers at home.

150

Rural communities in four states were reached through the Circuit Rider initiative.

345

School officials, administrators, medical professionals, industry representatives and early childhood educators were trained by EPA staff in Clean, Green, and Healthy Schools practices.

613

School personnel and maintenance staff were trained by EPA staff in integrated pest management (IPM) in schools reducing the number of children who are exposed to pesticides by thousands.

56

Schools received specialized training in *IAQ Tools for Schools* through EPA-funded partnerships, impacting more than 24,000 students.

1,300

Students, teachers, and parents attended presentations about careers in environmental education, severe weather events, ozone science and sun safety through EPA/Perot Museum of Nature and Science programming.

200

Additional students participated in educational sessions taught by EPA staff on how to protect air and water resources.

Circuit Rider

A Unique Program Making a Visible Difference in Communities

The Circuit Rider Initiative is one of the most unique programs in Region 6, and perhaps in the nation. With limited resources for outreach to small towns and rural communities, making a connection with these local jurisdictions on public health and the environment is challenging. Region 6 hired a Senior Environmental Employee (SEE) to travel around the Region and meet one-on-one with county health and environmental officials, and to visit with professionals at hospitals, libraries, schools, and with the general public at local health fairs. From these efforts, EPA is making an impact where we might not otherwise have had any connection.

History

Two years ago, Region 6 received \$20,000 from EPA's Office of Environmental Justice to fund a pilot outreach effort targeting the Panhandle of Texas, and some New Mexico communities. The Circuit Rider's job was to reach the vast--yet sparsely populated--geographic region of the Texas Panhandle, encompassing more than 25,000 square miles with population greater than 425,000. The initiative was successful in reaching over 3,500 people in FY11 and FY12.

Last year, the Regional lead program maintained the effort and sent the SEE to additional rural areas in Texas, Louisiana, and Arkansas to talk to stakeholders and provide information on lead poisoning prevention, indoor air and school health, and other children's health issues. The SEE visited libraries, hospitals and clinics, child care facilities and schools. City/county code enforcement and inspection/permitting offices received lead planners, RRP literature, and Small Entity Compliance Guides. The Circuit Rider visited 121 school districts, 62 libraries, 23 clinics, 23 city offices and had a presence had 5 community events in four states, speaking with an estimated **850 people in 2013**.

This year, the **Circuit Rider traveled to 150 communities**. Within those communities, the SEE visited 169 city/county health or environmental offices, 132 schools and libraries, 73 clinics, hospitals or health care professionals, and provided information at 9 health fairs or community events. The results of these one-on-one visits and appearances at community events have raised awareness about children's environmental health to thousands of people in rural communities in five states.



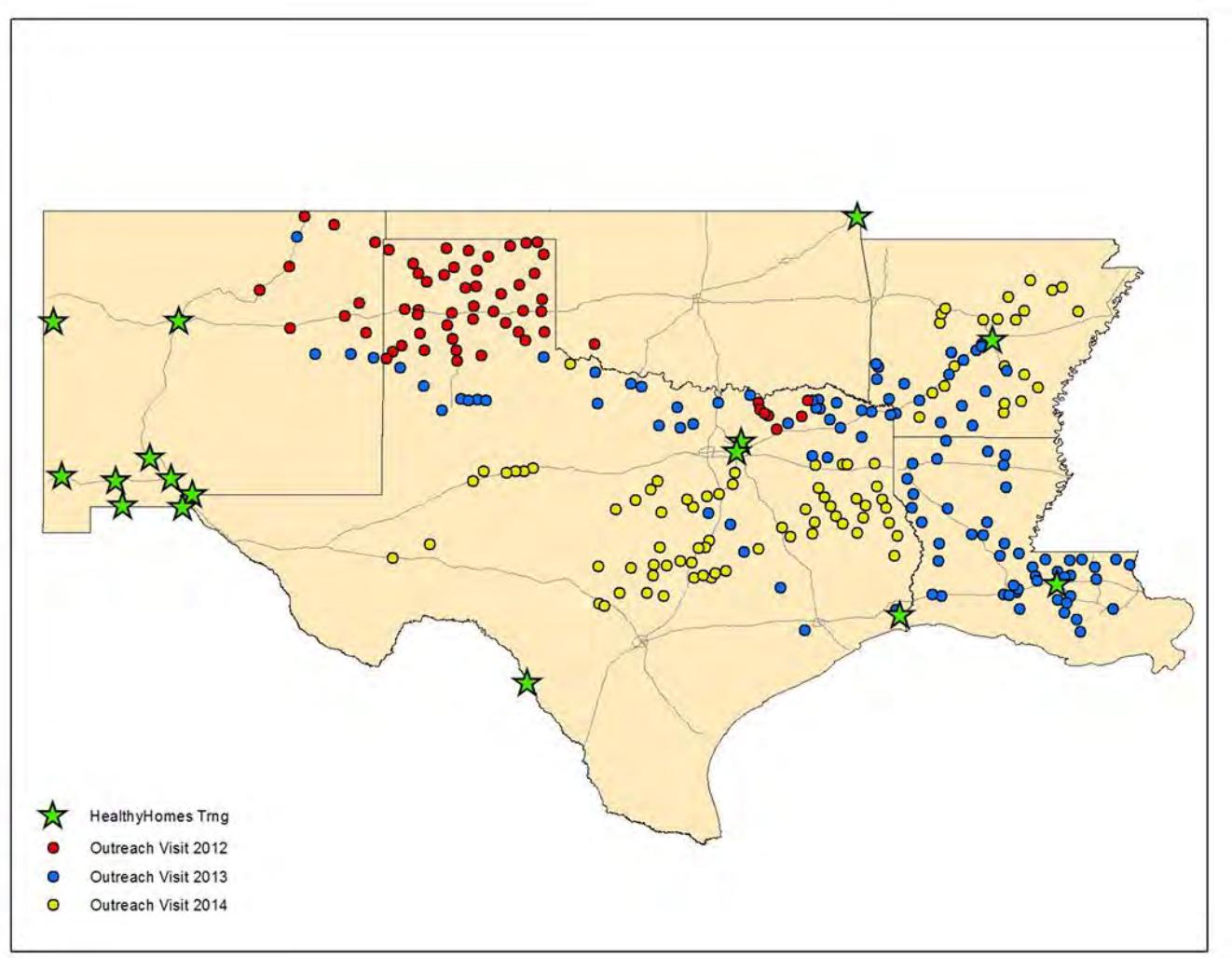
Circuit Rider

The following anecdotal information is typical of the contacts the circuit rider makes during her travels.

The WIC office in Taylor, TX handles all of Williamson County. They have four satellite offices and are distributing EPA materials to twenty partners in the Williamson County area. They received information on children's health and lead planners and have requested additional information.

Methodist Healthcare Ministries is based in San Antonio and covers the South Texas area (24 surrounding counties). I spoke with three of the nurses during the Kerr County Health Fair and gave them twenty information packets to be shared with their extended group later this week.

The map below provides the locations of all the communities the circuit rider has visited to date. In the same time period, EPA also funded *Healthy Homes* (see more on Healthy Homes on page 16) training events in communities that may not otherwise have received specialized training. Region 6 is working to make a visible difference in communities that are most in need.



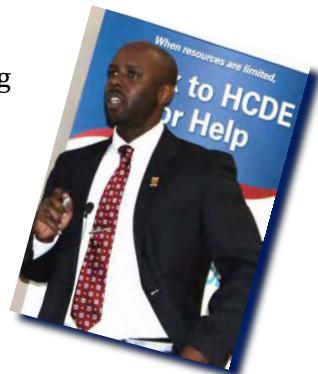
Clean, Green and Healthy Schools

Under the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007, EPA was required to study the impacts of healthy school environments on children. In Region 6, the Schools Coordinator provided technical assistance and expertise both internally, coordinating between Regional and National program offices, and externally providing logistical support for conferences, presentations, webinars, and consulting on Clean, Green and Healthy Schools initiatives.

Internal Coordination included coordinating grant efforts that support clean green and healthy schools, asthma education, and other environmental health projects where children learn and play, and participating in conference calls, video teleconferences, on-site meetings, and communicating with internal stakeholders whose work touches on school-based projects. **External Coordination** involved providing technical assistance for those who are responsible for keeping children healthy in the school environment. The following events summarize successes for FY14.

Healthy School Environments

In FY14, The Region 6 Schools Coordinator provided support for several training events throughout Texas that included the following:



- A full-day training in partnership with Harris County Department of Education and Katy Independent School District entitled, *2014 Texas Healthy School Environments Symposium*. Over **160 school facility managers and vendors** from across the state gathered to learn how creating and maintaining safe and healthy school environments can positively impact student health, attendance, and academic performance. Session topics included EPA's IAQ Tools for Schools Framework for Effective School IAQ Management, New Cleaning Standards, Moisture Control, HVAC Maintenance Best Practices, Material Selection (flooring), Integrated Pest Management, Energy Management, and Advances in Safety and Security.
- A full-day workshop at the Department of Health and Human Services entitled, *Houston Initiative and Roundtable Discussion: The Environment Related to Asthma and Respiratory Disease in Pre-School and School-Age Children*. Participants developed recommendations that will serve as essential core elements in action plans to decrease environmental exposure triggers that exacerbate asthma and other respiratory diseases in greater Houston. Over **30 community leaders including medical professionals, school district administrators, university faculty/researchers, school board trustees, industry representatives, early childhood educators, and federal, state, and local officials attended**.
- A full-day workshop with mid-level and senior managers from Houston Independent School District (HISD) on plans to improve school environments through enhanced awareness, training, and accountability. The managers, who are responsible for the maintenance and operations of all district building stock, attended the Texas Healthy School Environments Symposium held in Houston, Texas on April 2, 2014 and requested assistance in improving the school environment.

Clean, Green and Healthy Schools

The Regional Schools Coordinator provided technical assistance that included facilitating a meeting in Dallas, to develop an action plan, and conducting a meeting with HISD officials in Houston to announce plans to develop a strategy and timeline for execution. Regional Administrator, Ron Curry participated in both meetings and has pledged full support to the efforts.

- Delivered a technical session at the South Texas Association of School Maintenance Officials (STASMO) Summer Conference on June 27th, entitled “Creating Exceptional Facilities for Student Success.” STASMO is an affiliate of the Texas Association of School Business Officials, and comprised of school facility managers and private industry vendors that serve school districts. This is a continuation of targeted outreach efforts to school districts along the Texas-Mexico border. **Approximately 75 school district representatives and industry partners attended the session.**

Sustainable Chemicals Management

Presentations on best practices for managing chemicals throughout their entire life cycle were delivered to the following stakeholder groups in Texas. **Over 80 teachers industry partners and maintenance and operations professionals were trained during these events.**

- South Texas Association of School Maintenance Officials (STASMOS), February, 2014 STASMOS is an organization that provides networking and education opportunities for Maintenance and Operations professionals working in school districts in and around South Texas.
- Alamo Area School Maintenance, Operations, and Construction Association (AASMOCA), July, 2014 - AASMOCA is an organization that provides networking and education opportunities for Maintenance and Operations professionals working in school districts in and around San Antonio.
- Science Teachers and Industry (STI) Workshop in Houston in July, 2014. – STI is an annual workshop organized by the Texas Chemical Council's Outreach Team in coordination with the Harris County Department of Education that connects STEM principles with real-world applications and connects curriculum with careers.

Integrated Pest Management

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is an essential component of a healthy school environment. In 2012, EPA released its *Strategic and Implementation Plans for School Integrated Pest Management* for federal fiscal years 2012-2014. This Strategy and the *US EPA Region 6 Pesticides Program 2012-2015 Integrated Pest Management Program Action Plan* are the foundation for all pesticide safety and IPM activities carried out in Region 6 school environments.

Clean, Green and Healthy Schools

IPM Stakeholder and Regional Collaboration

The Regional Pesticides Program focuses its efforts on pesticide safety and IPM in schools to promote a “wholesale” approach to sustainable and verifiable programs that mitigate pests and reduce reliance on pesticides. This approach included serving on the Southern IPM Center’s Advisory Council, and collaborating and consulting the Southern IPM Center’s IPM in Schools working group which represents State Lead Agencies, Extension Services, and industry in the southern States, to include Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas. Region 6 staff drafted the US EPA *Model Pesticide Safety and IPM in Schools Guidance Policy for Schools*, available on EPA’s web site at <http://www.epa.gov/pestwise/publications/ipm/Model-School-IPM-Policy.pdf>



This year, Region 6 staff expanded its regional stakeholder outreach to include representatives and groups from the school health sector to include school health nurses, state health department school and adolescent health programs, university public health researchers, and not-for-profit organizations focused on improving health outcomes for children.

In FY14, Region 6 continued to expand its **Pesticide Safety and School IPM in Indian Country** outreach and consultation capacity by including pesticide safety and IPM in schools in its cooperative grant with the Eight Northern Indian Pueblo Council (ENIPC). The ENIPC provides outreach, training, and consultation to 22 Pueblos and Tribes throughout New Mexico. EPA Regional representatives participated in three meetings with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) environmental program and Indian Health Service (IHS) environmental health regional staffs to facilitate and promote pesticide safety and IPM in Tribal schools in Oklahoma. Region 6 staff reviewed, consulted, and provided comments to Region 10 for the draft “IPM Assessment Tool for IHS”. This will assist EPA and IHS with collaboration and targeted outreach efforts to promote pesticide safety and IPM in Tribal Schools.

IPM Outreach and Training activities were conducted at eight venues **training a total of 613** school facilities and maintenance staff, school nurses, IPM coordinators, environmental health and public health officials, school leaders and pest management professionals.

- Texas School Nurses Organization Annual Meeting, San Antonio, Texas
- Healthy School Symposium, Entomological Society of America Annual Meeting, Austin, Texas
- Texas A&M AgriLife Extension State-wide School IPM Annual Training, Austin, Texas
- Texas IPM Affiliates for Public Schools Annual Meeting, Austin, Texas
- US EPA Region 6 Environmental Summit, Dallas, Texas
- US EPA Region 6 Webinar "The Indoor-Outdoor Air Connection: How Complete is our Asthma Action Plan"
- 19th Annual Inter-Tribal Environmental Council Conference, Catoosa, Oklahoma
- CDC Workshop "Biology and Control of Vectors and Public Health Pests" Richardson, Texas

Partnerships

Community partnerships, are key to achieving environmental health outcomes. Through EPA-funded grants, and by leveraging technical assistance, partners provide significant opportunities to improve children's environmental health. The following list describes the successful outcomes of Regional partner organizations who received funding from EPA.³

Universities

Southeastern Louisiana University (SLU)

The grant with SLU was initiated in FY12 to implement the Indoor Air Quality (*IAQ*) *Tools for Schools Program* in Tangipahoa Parish School District, final results were reported in FY14 showing that SLU improved indoor Air Quality at **12 schools, impacting a total of over 7,000 students and staff.**

University of Tulsa (UT)

The goal of UT's Air Program was to facilitate the implementation of *IAQ Tools for Schools* in Bartlesville Public School District (OK), Kenwood School District (OK), and North Little Rock School District (AR). Through their efforts, the University of Tulsa improved indoor air quality at **34 schools in 3 districts, impacting over 17,000 students and staff.**

Texas A&M University Health Science Center School of Rural Public Health

This grant provided funds to educate 50 school age children diagnosed with asthma. It also provided assistance to develop and implement an observational instrument to be used by *promotoras* during educational home visits with parents, and provided continuing education to respiratory and nursing students, school nurses, and public health professionals. In FY14, **93 healthcare professionals were trained** on the environmental management of asthma triggers.

University of Texas Health Science Center San Antonio

The South Texas Environmental Education and Research (STEER) Program developed and delivered an in-depth indoor air/environmental asthma control training program for respiratory therapists and faculty, statewide. This will provide them with the knowledge and tools they need to integrate indoor air quality (IAQ) into RT curricula at their own campuses. To date, the grant has provided training to **over 1,000 people.**

University of Arkansas for Medical Science

This grant employed a model for a Healthy Homes collaborative effort between UAMS College of Public Health and *Home School Instruction for Parents of Pre-School Youngters* to build capacity in Arkansas for education and health protection from hazards in the home. The project will assist parents and families in managing indoor environmental asthma triggers and other contaminants affecting respiratory illnesses.

Departments of Health

Arkansas Department of Health (ADH)

In FY14 Region 6 provided a small grant to ADH to address healthy environments in child care facilities in Arkansas. Results from this grant will be provided in FY15.

³ Project periods for each grant varies. Most grants are funded for a two-year project period. Some of these grants were awarded in FY12 and were closed out in FY14.

Partnerships

Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ)

The Region 6 Schools Program established a cooperative agreement with the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ) in FY12 to provide training seminars on sustainable chemical management and Pollution Prevention best management practices to science teachers across Oklahoma. Under this agreement, ODEQ **trained 51 teachers in 2 trainings.**

Texas Department of State Health Services (TDSHS)

Region 6 works closely with the state Asthma Coordinator at the TDSHS. This year the Children's Health Coordinator facilitated a meeting in Arlington with staff from TDSHS. Attendees included Children's Medical Center, Cook Children's Hospital, the Health and Wellness Alliance for Children and staff from EPA. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce the incoming state asthma coordinator to work going on in North Texas to address asthma. Region 6 will collaborate with TDSHS in the upcoming year to provide a Healthy Homes Training for two communities in Texas.

Non Profit Organizations

American Lung Association of the Southwest (ALA)

ALA trained health care professionals, school nurses and others about the environmental management of asthma triggers. ALA trained **200 children with asthma and 200 parents** through their Open Airways for Schools program.

Children's Environmental Health Network (CEHN)

In FY14 Region 6 funded a small grant to CEHN to provide training to child care workers in Texas. The goals of the project are to train 250 child care workers in indoor/outdoor environmental health hazards in child care facilities, to be able to identify and mitigate triggers, and to train parents in reducing exposure to environmental triggers at home. Results of this grant will be reported in FY15.

Children's Environmental Health Institute (CEHI)

The office of Children's Health Protection provided a small grant that was leveraged by Agency for Toxix Substances and Disease Registry to help fund the 8th Biennial National Symposium on Children's Environmental Health. This year's symposium will be held in November near Austin, Texas and will highlight research efforts focused on *Prenatal Environmental Exposures as a Determinant of Early Childhood and Adult Disease.*

Edge Education Group Institute, Inc.

In FY14, the Region 6 Schools Program continued their longstanding partnership with Edge Education Group Institute, Inc. to align environmental education with the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math curricula under development in Dallas-Fort Worth area elementary schools. Activities included the delivery of Air Quality and Water Quality modules in collaboration with members of the Region 6 Schools Coordination Team. **Over 200 4th and 5th grade students were educated** on ways to protect air and water resources and tasked with solving math problems associated with each topic. Students were also charged with incorporating simple green and sustainable practices into their everyday lives and being advocates for change in their communities.

Partnerships

Perot Museum of Nature and Science

Last year, Region 6 and the Perot Museum of Nature and Science signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to work cooperatively to encourage parents, teachers, children, and others to become aware of the natural environments in which we live, and how our actions can affect those environments, our health and the health of children. This spring, EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy recognized Region 6 for creating the MOU and noted that it addresses the EPA theme of *Making a Visible Difference in Communities*. Results of the partnership to date include:

- The Perot Museum broadcast the first Science Cast on February 14th. Carl Edlund, Director of the Region 6 Superfund Division spoke to 429 students in grades 4-10 on environmental careers. Students teleconferenced in from 9 schools in Texas and New York.
- The Perot Museum broadcast a second talk on May 5th featuring Greg Story, from the National Weather Service, who spoke on storms and weather to 866 students from Texas, Louisiana, Florida, and Wisconsin.
- On July 9th, Paula Selzer, Children's Health Coordinator for Region 6 office will presented a SunWise training for 10 teachers. SunWise is a public health program designed to teach K-8 students about sun safe behaviors and the science and health effects of UV radiation.
- On October 16th, Region 6 scientist, Dr. Sala Senkayi in the water division, will present her research on airports and childhood cancer rates.
- Plans are also underway to coordinate with the Perot Museum, NASA, Corps of Engineers and others to host an earth-science event for children that will feature an astronaut.

Pediatric Environmental Health Speciality Units

Each year, EPA joins with the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry to provide funding for the Pediatric Environmental Health Speciality Units (PEHSU). There is one PEHSU for each EPA Region and they are generally housed in teaching hospitals. In Region 6, the PEHSU is located at the Southwest Center for Pediatric Health at University of Texas Health Science Center in Tyler, Texas.

EPA works closely with the PEHSU to identify regional priorities and collaborate on projects that will protect children from environmental risks to their health. In FY14, staff and managers from Region 6 pesticides, agriculture, and children's health programs met with the PEHSU to discuss ways to further collaborate on preventing pesticide exposure to workers and their families. Meeting outcomes included setting up a permanent contact between the pesticides group and PEHSU staff, discussion about planning webinars for state agricultural extension services, and coordinating on health symptoms associated with pesticides.

The PEHSU provides a toll-free phone number for physician referrals, information for parents, and consulting. They also coordinate with EPA to offer free workshops and webinars and they act as advisors for children's health issues where EPA needs to refer stakeholders for pediatric medical issues that are beyond our authority.

Addressing Childhood Asthma and Lead Paint Poisoning Prevention through Healthy Homes and Community Outreach

The poverty statistics in Dallas are staggering: 38 percent of our children live in poverty, and Dallas has the highest rate of children's poverty among cities with 1 million or more residents. From 2000 to 2012, the poor were the fastest-growing segment of Dallas' population, increasing 41 percent. In 2012, almost one-half of our residents lived in low-income households, defined as those below 185 percent of the poverty level.⁴

Dallas is one of the largest cities in Region 6, and sadly, it leads the nation in childhood poverty. Region-wide, about 28 percent of children under the age of 18, live in poverty. Children who live in poor housing stock and those who have poor access to quality health care have are more likely to suffer from asthma attacks. More than 7 million children nationwide have asthma. The prevalence is growing and the cause of asthma is still unknown.

EPA's asthma program is a comprehensive approach providing parents, health care providers, school administrators, and others with the tools they need to protect children from exposure to asthma triggers. EPA promotes the scientific understanding of environmental asthma triggers and provides the means to address asthma through research, education and outreach. In addition, the President's Task Force on Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks to Children released the *Coordinated Federal Action Plan to Reduce Racial and Ethnic Asthma Disparities*, which is an outcome of the collaborative interagency Asthma Disparities Working Group, co-chaired by EPA, HHS, and HUD. The goal of the *Action Plan* is to reduce the burden caused by asthma, especially among children — in particular, minority children and children with family incomes below the poverty level.

To address the asthma epidemic, Region 6 funds grants to universities, state health departments, and non-profit agencies who are working to fight asthma. In addition, regional staff also provide technical assistance to these, and other organizations.

Health and Wellness Alliance for Children

In 2013, the Regional Children's Health Coordinator joined the Steering Committee of the Health and Wellness Alliance for Children (HWAC). A division of Children's Medical Center, the HWAC has taken a "collective impact" approach to addressing asthma in Dallas, where 60,000 children are impacted by asthma--many of them in the southern sector of Dallas in one zip code where poverty is high, access to preventative care is low, and sub-standard living conditions are prevalent.⁵



⁴ [Dallas Morning News. Poverty is Eating at Dallas' Core.](#) Editorial by Regina Montoya, Mayor's Task Force on Poverty. August 18, 2014.

⁵ <http://healthandwellnessalliance.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/6-Collective-Impact-article.pdf>

Addressing Childhood Asthma and Lead Paint Poisoning Prevention through Healthy Homes and Community Outreach

Bringing together more than 25 organizations from hospitals, faith-based organizations, social services, government, schools, and donors, the HWAC has developed a *common agenda* that includes working in four key areas:

- Improving Physical Environments
- Improving Access to Care
- Improving Quality and consistency of Care
- Improving Asthma Management Education for Families and Children

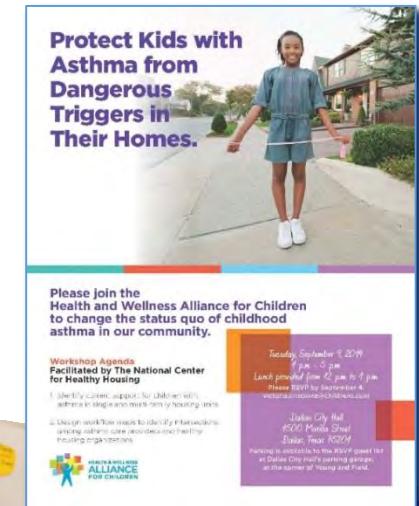
The Children's Health Coordinator is the Co-Chair of the Asthma Healthy Physical Environments sub-committee. The committee is currently working on mitigating asthma triggers in multi-family and single family housing rental units and hosting a cross-sector workshop on the role of healthy homes in children's health.

The HWAC also sponsored an asthma screening during Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month at Jubilee Park in Dallas, EPA staff supported the event. More than 150 families attended the event and 52 children were screened for asthma. In addition, 28 families asked for follow up information. Visit the HWAC web site for information. <http://www.healthandwellnessalliance.com/>

Healthy Homes

Region 6 has placed special emphasis on promoting the *Healthy Homes approach to protecting children's environmental health* and in FY14, reached a milestone of having trained over **1,000 people in the principles of Healthy Homes in five states.**

Through a contract with the National Center for Healthy Housing, and in partnership with the Health and Wellness Alliance for Children, the Office of Children's Health Protection provided a technical assistance workshop in September for **40 participants** including City of Dallas code inspectors, city attorneys, the director of the 311 program, and staff from Children's Medical Center such as respiratory therapists, nurses, ER managers, and case workers. Outcomes from the workshop included, 1) connecting city attorneys with potential expert witnesses in code violation cases, 2) connecting hospital case workers with city services to help clients obtain better housing conditions, and 3) identifying gaps in communication and technical expertise that will be addressed in a full day training entitled, *Launching a Healthy Homes Initiative*, to be conducted for all Dallas code inspectors in 2015.



Addressing Childhood Asthma and Lead Paint Poisoning Prevention through Healthy Homes and Community Outreach

In FY14, the US/Mexico Border 2020 Program funded Healthy Homes training for the Southern Area Health Education Center (SoAHEC) at New Mexico State University. More than **358 people were trained** under this grant and it is estimated that more than **3,000 people** will continue to have long-term benefits as their children grow in healthy homes. (See page 17 for additional details).

The Office of Children's Health Protection also provided funding for an *Essentials for Healthy Homes Practitioners* training course held in September at Santa Fe Community College (SFCC). The two-day course **trained 13 people**. The target audience was weatherization workers and interested community partners. SFCC brought in a local pest expert to provide additional instruction. Participant's provided their feedback about the instruction in integrated pest management.

...It was incredibly informative... My crew has to go under mobile homes with all kinds of bugs and this opened my eyes to the usefulness of being educated about bugs.

Was very impressed...I hate the use of chemicals to treat situations...would really like to bring the rest of my crews to a presentation he instructs.

Community Outreach to Address Asthma

Region 6 has partnered with Baylor Hospital and Medical Center at Dallas's for the past couple of years to support Baylor Camp Airways. Camp Airways is a free one-day camp where kids learn to monitor and manage their asthma. Two to Five times a year, Baylor hosts the camp to combine asthma education with kids' favorite activities. Campers receive their own peak flow meter, EPA pedometers and booklets, and enjoy field trips, games, and other activities. The IAQ Coordinator attends the event and has facilitated a partnership with *7 Day Fitness*, an organization that provides the physical activity portion of camp. This year, **80 children and 10 respiratory therapists received training**.

The Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) Coordinator established a new partnership in 2014 with Asthma Chasers, a grass roots non-profit organization working in Southern Dallas, where asthma rates are particularly high. Region 6 staff attended an event at the Crescent Hospital and Lancaster Nursing and Rehabilitation site to support this initiative. Regional IAQ, Schools, and IPM Coordinators held a meeting to train Asthma Chasers staff in the use of *IAQ Tools for Schools* to promote healthy school environments.



Children's Health Collaboration with EPA Programs

Border 2020

The Children's Health Coordinator works across the Region to ensure children's health issues are included in all Regional actions. The US/Mexico Border 2020 program is a priority area for CEH and the two programs work closely together. This year, the Coordinator worked with staff and grantees to provide technical assistance, review grant applications, and coordinate on projects as requested. Border 2020 provided funding to the following organizations that target children's health issues.

- The City of Laredo received funding in FY13 to develop outreach and exposure assessment tools to protect children's health. Materials were developed specifically for the targeted audience to be used in school outreach and home assessments. Outreach was conducted in *colonias*, homes, hospitals, and schools and completed in FY14. **A total of 135 people** completed an on-line environmental home assessment in both English and Spanish, **67 medical providers** in Laredo, Texas and Nuevo Laredo, Mexico area were trained in an environmental health assessment tool and **155 Home environmental surveys** were accomplished. The project reached approximately **5,000 children and benefited an estimated 13,000 people** (through home assessments and Physician trainings).
- In 2014, Region 6 provided funding to New Mexico State University for the Southern Area Health Education Center (SoAHEC) to do Healthy Homes training. The funding allowed Health Educators from SoAHEC to teach classes in several communities along the Border to those who may not otherwise have received the specialized training. Classes covered the seven principles of healthy homes, with special emphasis on pediatric environmental health, indoor air quality, safe cleaning practices and integrated pest management. By training **358 people (151 child care providers and 120 pregnant or new teen parents, and 87 community health workers)** under this grant, SoAHEC estimates the long term results will benefit more than **3,000 people** who will continue to have long-term benefits as their children grow in healthy homes.



This summer, the Children's Health Coordinator participated in Four State Regional Workgroup meeting in San Antonio, Texas. (The four states are Tamaulipas, Nuevo León, Coahuila, and Texas.) As a result of that meeting, EPA has developed a stronger partnership with the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio's *South Texas Environmental Education and Research Program (STEER)* and is now coordinating planning calls to better support children's environmental health in the Harlingen area.

Also this summer, the Schools Coordinator delivered a session entitled, *Creating Exceptional Facilities for Student Success* at the South Texas Association of School Maintenance Officials Summer Conference in the summer of 2014. Approximately **75 school district representatives** and industry partners attended the session.

Children's Health Collaboration with EPA Programs

Air, Lead, Environmental Justice, Water, Superfund, Enforcement, External Affairs

The Children's Health Coordinator works closely with many program offices, for instance; the Indoor Environments (asthma) and lead poisoning prevention, Air Toxics, and Air Planning programs, all of which are housed within the Multimedia, Permitting and Planning Division. The Coordinator also works with the Office of Environmental Justice and Tribal Affairs, reviewing grant proposals, providing technical assistance to grantees, providing information to Tribal contacts on children's health issues, and this year, wrote a blog on Healthy Homes to be featured on the national Environmental Justice web site. In FY15, the Office of Children's Health Protection is hosting a national summit. The Coordinator served on the national planning committee, and led the Regional efforts to collect comments on the soon-to-be released *Strategy for Protecting Children's Environmental Health*, the focus of the national summit in FY15.

The Office of Children's Health Protection provided funding assistance in FY14 to the Bosque Ecosystem Monitoring Program at Bosque School, a joint program of the Bosque School and the University of New Mexico. The grant will provide the means for students (K-12 and college interns) to monitor the water quality of the Rio Grande and provide those results to watershed Federal and local stakeholders and those living in the greater Albuquerque area. One of the project's objectives is to link the water quality contaminant data to public health outcomes. The grant will fund water quality sampling events and lab costs, analyses sharing events, a student congress, and community outreach events.

The Border program also provided partial funding to the University of Texas at El Paso to support a study on water quality in Vinton, Texas where there is an absence of suitable drinking water, and children have tested high for arsenic levels in their blood. The Children's Health Coordinator organized a meeting with the University of Texas at El Paso in September to hear results from their research on arsenic in children's blood sampled in these communities. Key staff and managers from water, border and other programs participated and provided suggestions for additional research and potential funding streams.

The Superfund program used the IEUBK model targeting 10 ug/Dl in blood for soil lead cleanup at the Tar Creek site and Ottawa County, Oklahoma resulting children's blood levels being dramatically improved: from 35 percent in 1992 to zero today for the 10 ug/Dl goal; and only two percent today are above the 5 ug/Dl goal--below State and US averages. The improvement was the result of EPA cleanup actions and the collaboration with public health agencies for a vigorous outreach and education program; plus property buyouts on the Tar Creek site; and, cleanup in high human access areas throughout the County.

In FY14 the Children's Health Coordinator worked with the enforcement team that reviews Environmental Impact Statements under the National Environmental Policy Act. As a follow up to the CEH training provided to the NEPA team in FY13, the coordinator reviewed several Environmental Impact Statements in FY14 and provided language to include in EPA's comments on the proposed project. The goal is to get other federal agencies to consider children's health in the EIS projects they undertake--Executive Order 13045 directs agencies to specifically consider children's health protection in all agency actions.

The Children's Health Coordinator worked with the office of External Affairs to provide CEH messages for blogs and press releases, to review Environmental Education (EE) grants, and to coordinate with the EE Coordinator on Green Fest and the Perot Museum's Teachers Open House.

Children's Health Month October 2013

During the month of October, special emphasis is placed on raising awareness about children's environmental health. In October 2013, the third annual Children's Health Fall Festival was held at the Nash Davis Recreation Center. EPA supported the event by planning and preparing for exhibitors and activities months in advance. However, due to the nation-wide shut down of the Federal government that occurred in October, EPA staff were not able to participate the day of the event. Partners stepped in and provided support to make the day a success for the families of West Dallas.

The Children's Health Coordinator attended several events in October/November in her role coordinating with external stakeholders and to increase knowledge about the latest research in children's environmental health. The Coordinator:

- Represented EPA at the *Faith and Community Health Summit* sponsored by the Department of Health and Human Services on October 24th. The summit was part of the Federal Interagency Workgroup that EPA has been participating on for the past year.
- Attended *Environmental Health Research Meets Clinical Practice and Public Policy* October 29-30 in Washington, DC. to hear about research, explore opportunities for improving children's health and public policy, and to identify environmental health disparities adversely impacting children's health. EPA Administrator, Gina McCarthy highlighted areas where voluntary actions were taken by industry and Federal partners to reduce environmental exposures without Federal mandates.
- Participated in the Children's Environmental Health Institute one-day Asthma Roundtable on November 15th, in Houston, Texas. Twenty-five stakeholders were invited to participate and OCHP Acting Director, Jackie Mosby traveled to Houston to open the meeting and to provide comments on the *Federal Coordinated Action Plan to Address Racial and Ethnic Asthma Disparities* and suggest ways the Houston work can support the plan.



Activities planned for Children's Health Month FY15

- Green Fest on the Bridge kicks off Children's Health Month in FY15-- EPA staffed booths on the Continental Street Pedestrian Bridge featuring information about water conservation, asthma, lead poisoning prevention, and EPA's Brownfield's program, staff spoke to about 200 people on a windy Saturday in late September.
- Presentation planned by EPA scientist and an open house for teachers at the Perot Museum. Approximately 600 teachers are currently registered to attend the open house.
- Presentations at the Health and Wellness Alliance for Children steering committee meeting and the West Dallas Coalition meeting.

