

Summary of OCHP Accomplishments Response to IG Report

Since its creation in 1997, the Office of Children's Health Protection (OCHP) has been instrumental in coordinating the implementation of the National Agenda to Protect Children's Health from Environmental Threats. OCHP has been very effective in leveraging resources within the Agency and with external stakeholders to ensure that the directives of the National Agenda are met. In addition, in 2002 OCHP was directed to lead the EPA's Aging Initiative to protect the health of older adults. Since the official launch of the Aging Initiative in October 2002, OCHP has drawn on ongoing efforts throughout EPA to develop collaborative relationships with regional and program offices, as well as external stakeholders.

OCHP's work falls into four areas: 1) regulations and standards, 2) science and risk assessment, 3) outreach, public awareness, community based programs, and education, and 4) Aging Initiative. OCHP has been instrumental in bringing children's environmental health to the forefront within EPA and outside of the Agency. Some highlights of OCHP's efforts include:

- C National Academy of Sciences (NAS) Study of the Future of Toxicity Testing.
- C Supplemental Guidance for Assessing Cancer Susceptibility from Early-Life Exposure to Carcinogens (External Review Draft).
- C First Time Ever Collaboration of State Environmental and Health Officials to Implement a National Action Agenda to Reduce Childhood Asthma: Environmental Council of the States (ECOS) and Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO).
- C Publication of outreach tools including the Children's Environmental Health Yearbook; Tips to Protect Children from Environmental Health Threats; a new general brochure, "Protect Our Children, Protect Our Future"; and an award winning website
- C American Nurses Foundation/University of Maryland School of Nurses Collaboration to develop a continuing education program for nurses in environmental health.
- C Interagency group to coordinate the Children's Environmental Health program at the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC).
- C National Agenda for the Environment and the Aging

A detailed summary of OCHP's accomplishments follows.

Regulations and Standards

OCHP works closely with all program offices to promote the consideration of children's health risks in regulatory actions and to assist in complying with Executive Order 13045, "Protection of Children from Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks." Selected OCHP's regulatory activities include the following:

- C **Rule Writer's Guide to E.O. 13045.** EPA and other federal agencies and departments are required to evaluate the health and safety effects of planned regulations on children under Executive Order 13045, "Protection of Children from Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks." In addition, an Agency policy requires all EPA standards and regulations to explicitly consider risks to fetuses, infants, and children. To help its rule writers comply with the Executive Order and the Agency's policy on children's health, OCHP worked with the Regulatory Policy Council and the Regulatory Steering group to issue this guidance in November 1998.
- C **Children's Health Valuation Handbook.** OCHP and OPEI developed the Handbook as a reference tool for analysts conducting economic analyses of EPA regulations and policies that may affect risks to children's health. This handbook focuses on valuing changes in risks to children's health caused by environmental improvement or degradation. It addresses incorporating children's health considerations in efficiency assessments and distributional analyses. All program offices contributed to the development of this handbook.
- C **America's Children and the Environment.** OCHP and OPEI developed the first children's environmental health indicators report anywhere. The America's Children and the Environment brings together, in one place, quantitative information from a variety of sources to show trends in levels of environmental contaminants in air, water, food, and soil; concentrations of contaminants measured in the bodies of mothers and children; and childhood diseases that may be influenced by environmental factors.
- C **Children's Health Valuation Research Grants (STAR Grants).** EPA needs accurate environmental economics research on which to base and evaluate its policies. OCHP worked closely with ORD and other program offices to develop a research program under the Science to Achieve Results (STAR) program.

Science and Risk Assessment

OCHP has been a leader in the Agency's work on science and risk assessment related to children's environmental health protection. For example:

- C **National Academy of Sciences (NAS) Study of the Future of Toxicity Testing.** OCHP recently initiated and co-chaired an EPA effort to establish and implement the NAS study. The 3.5 year study emphasizes generating toxicity data relevant to early life stages and the aging population.

- C **Supplemental Guidance for Assessing Cancer Susceptibility from Early-Life Exposure to Carcinogens (External Review Draft).** OCHP was heavily involved through the Science Policy Council in developing and approving the guidance.
- C In 2000, OCHP hosted the **National Workshop to Identify Critical Windows of Exposure for Children’s Health**, which considered the importance of the timing of exposure to toxic chemicals and the affect on respiratory, immune, reproductive, nervous, cardiovascular, and endocrine systems, as well as general growth and cancer. The workshop’s conclusions were published in peer reviewed scientific literature (<http://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/docs/2000/suppl-3/toc.html>).
- C **National Children’s Study:** OCHP co-chairs the Senior Staff Planning Committee of the President’s Task Force on Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks to Children. The Task Force initiated the National Children’s Study, a longitudinal cohort study to investigate basic mechanisms of developmental disorders and environmental factors that influence health and developmental processes. (www.nationalchildrensstudy.gov).
- C **Guidance on Selecting the Appropriate Age Groups for Assessing Childhood Exposures to Environmental Contaminants (External Review Draft).** OCHP chairs this Risk Assessment Forum effort.

In addition to these efforts, OCHP has played an active role in many ongoing agency efforts to ensure children’s health is adequately considered in EPA’s science activities, including:

- C **IRIS (Integrated Risk Information System) Consensus Review**, a database of human health effects that may result from exposure to various substances found in the environment.
- C **VCCEP (Voluntary Children’s Chemical Evaluation Program),**
- C **EPA’s Human Health Research Planning efforts,**
- C **World Health Organization (WHO) and International Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS).**

Outreach, Public Awareness, Community Based Programs, and Education

STATES

OCHP supports state efforts to build capacity to deal with children's environmental health:

- C **First Time Collaboration of State Environmental and Health Officials to Implement a National Action Agenda to Reduce Childhood Asthma: Environmental Council of the States (ECOS) and Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO)** EPA is providing support to ECOS and ASTHO to develop and implement a national action agenda to reduce environmental triggers of childhood asthma. A national working group comprised of state environment and health officials drafted the national action agenda, Catching Your

Breath: Strategies to Reduce Environmental Factors that Contribute to Asthma in Children. Five states are currently conducting pilot projects to implement the national action agenda. In addition to these pilots, OCHP will soon announce the award of approximately \$360,000 in grants to about seven additional states to support the joint efforts of state environment and health agencies to minimize the environmental triggers of childhood asthma. To date, the process has involved more than 250 people from 41 states, the federal government, and other stakeholder groups.

- C **National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)** State Legislatures are beginning to consider children's environmental health in state legislation, policy initiatives, and funding. NCSL represents state legislators and staff in all 50 states. With OCHP support, NCSL is helping state legislatures address the issue of children's environmental health. NCSL has produced a video designed specifically for state legislatures on children's environmental health, developed an on-line tracking system of pending state legislation and enacted statutes on various children's environmental health topics, provided technical assistance to state legislatures, and is developing a legislative options guide on children's environmental health.

OUTREACH

- C **Child Health Champion Pilot Program** Eleven communities participated in the Child Health Champion Campaign pilot program that was designed to empower local citizens and communities to take voluntary steps toward protecting their children from environmental health threats, such as lead, asthma triggers, and unsafe drinking water. OCHP initiated the Child Health Champion Campaign to meet specific goals of Executive Order 13045 and EPA's National Agenda to Protect Children's Health from Environmental Threats. A Child Health Champion Community Team was established in each pilot community and:

1. Identified local children's environment health issues, such as a high incidence of hospital admissions and school absences due to asthma;
2. Set community-specific goals to protect children; and
3. Developed and implemented action plans to achieve those goals.

The pilot program has ended and an evaluation is available. It is hoped that the many valuable lessons learned from the Child Health Champion pilot program will be useful for future community-based projects. OCHP convened an Agency-wide work group to develop the pilot program. Each region was responsible for managing its pilot project.

- C **Tools:** OCHP provides information and tools to help people protect children from environmental risks. OCHP worked with program and regions to develop the **EPA Children's Environmental Health Yearbook and its Supplement, the agency's early inventory of its activities to protect children from environmental hazards; a set of tips** - easy steps parents and other caregivers could take to protect children from environmental risks; and **a new general brochure "Protect Children, Protect Our Future"**. The brochure's purpose is to raise awareness about children's environmental health issues among citizens, government, and other organizations and to enable them to take action to protect children. Finally, OCHP worked with program offices and regions in the development of its **award-winning web site**.

- C **Children's Health Month:** October is Children's Health Month and OCHP works with program offices and regions to promote their messages and highlight their many efforts to protect children from environmental risks during the entire month. OCHP has developed a Children's Health Month calendar with daily tips to protect children from environmental risks. OCHP works with program offices and regions to provide opportunities for the Administrator and other high-ranking EPA officials to participate in events highlighting children's health protection.

HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

OCHP supports efforts to expand the integration of environmental health into health care provider education and practice.

- C **American Nurses Foundation/University of Maryland School of Nurses Collaboration** As the largest group of health care providers (2.6 million in the United States), nurses can play an important role in protecting children from environmental health risks. With OCHP support, the American Nurses Foundation in collaboration with the University of Maryland School of Nursing developed a continuing education program for nurses in environmental health. Three on-line and in-print continuing education modules related to children's environmental health focus on pediatric environmental health in the home and community, in the school setting, and in the health care setting. MEDSCAPE is currently offering the module on home and community on its web site.
- C **American Academy of Pediatrics:** With EPA support, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) published the second edition of the Handbook of Pediatric Environmental Health, a comprehensive reference manual for pediatric clinicians to help identify, prevent and treat environmental health problems in children. Pediatricians are often not trained to recognize environmental hazards yet they are among parents' top health concerns for their children. This handbook will allow pediatricians to answer parent questions and address environmental health issues with the most up-to-date information. **OCHP worked with program staff to gain support for this effort and many program offices contributed toward the \$92,000 grant to AAP including: Office of Water; Office of Prevention, Pesticides, and Toxic Substances; Office of Air and Radiation and Office of Children's Health Protection.**
- C OCHP also supported an **AAP project to help pediatricians understand how to use the Handbook.** Each year for the past four years AAP sponsored a workshop for incoming chief pediatric residents to heighten awareness of pediatric environmental health issues. The goal was for the residents to incorporate their new knowledge into their residency education program. More than 160 incoming chief pediatric residents participated in these workshops and an evaluation of its effectiveness is ongoing.
- C **Ambulatory Pediatrics Association:** The field of pediatric environmental health needs champions and experts to make sure that children are protected from environmental risks. OCHP supported the Ambulatory Pediatric Association's development of competencies as well as ongoing education for a new Pediatric Environmental Health Fellowship program supported primarily through private funding.

- C **National Strategies for Health Care Providers: Pesticide Initiative:** EPA and the National Environmental Education and Training Foundation, in partnership with the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services, Agriculture and Labor, and health professionals nationwide, are supporting a national initiative to integrate health information related to pesticides into the education and practice of health care providers. **OCHP is a member of the federal planning committee for this initiative** and provided partial funding for a national forum held in June 2004. It is hoped that the pesticides initiative may be applied to other environmental health issues.

- C **JSI Research and Training Institute, Center for Environmental Studies:** OCHP supported an effort by the JSI Research and Training Institute in partnership with Greater Boston Physicians for Social Responsibility to develop model training materials and programs for health care providers based on the publication *In Harm's Way*. The Training Program for Health Professionals - *In Harm's Way: Toxic Threats to Child Development* – has been translated into Spanish and was distributed to pediatricians attending the First International Training on Children's Environmental Health organized as pre-congress activity of the Triennial Congress of Pediatrics for the south cone of Latin America. While the grant ended in 2002, the training program has been incorporated into numerous training sessions and workshops since that time. Just this past fall the training program was presented to 350 health professionals in two cities.

INTERNATIONAL

OCHP has been actively involved in international initiatives to protect children from environmental health risks to children. OCHP and OIA run an interagency group to coordinate the Children's Environmental Health program at the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC). This effort has been very successful in pulling together appropriate EPA program offices and regional representatives, resulting in:

- < Council resolutions to create a CEC work program on children's environmental health,
- < A high level of cooperation and collaboration on CEC children's work, including on indicators, asthma, and risk assessment issues,
- < Cooperation with the Department of Health and Human Services.

The group recently convened to discuss EPA's response to the CEC Taking Stock Report on Children and Chemicals, so that the Agency is well prepared to respond appropriately to queries about the report.

OCHP has also played a key role in the following international activities related to children's environmental health:

- C Creation and implementation of the **CEC Children's Environmental Health Program**—a trilateral effort to address children's environmental health in Canada, Mexico and the United States.

- C Launch of a **UN partnership at the World Summit on Sustainable Development to develop global indicators on children's environmental health**. The partnership includes other governments, NGOs and international organizations, and is currently being implemented.
- C Co-sponsored **conferences and workshops, prepared and distributed materials, and briefed key policy makers to create interest and action on children's environmental health in Europe, South East Asia, Africa, and Latin America**.
- C Creation of interest and action on children's environmental health in international and non governmental organizations including **OECD, UNEP, UNICEF, WHO, EU, G8 Health and Environment Ministers of the Americas, CEC; International Society of Doctors for the Environment (ISDE), International Children's Health Environment and Safety (INCHES)**, and various national organizations.
- C Creation of interest and action on children's environmental health at key international forums, including: **G8 meeting in 1997 and 2002, European Environment and Health Ministerial in 1999 and 2004, CEC council meetings 200-2003, Health and Environment Ministers of the Americas, 2002, UN General Assembly Special Session on Children, 2002, and the World Summit on Sustainable Development, 2002**.

Aging Initiative

EPA has taken a leadership role by establishing an Aging Initiative to protect the health of older adults. The Initiative, led by OCHP, is EPA's first coordinated approach to address environmental hazards that affect the health of older persons, and will result in a **National Agenda for the Environment and the Aging**. The National Agenda will study the effects of environmental hazards on the health of older persons and examine the impact that a rapidly aging population will have on the environment. OCHP's Aging Initiative is working with program offices to ensure that the needs and issues of older adults are included in products and policies. For example:

- C The Aging Initiative is working closely with the EPA Office of Research and Development (ORD) to help develop an **integrated research strategy to provide a scientific foundation that supports policies that include the interaction between aging and environmental exposure that results in adverse health effects on older adults**.
- C **Developing information on Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease and asthma triggers for older adults:** The Aging Initiative is working with ORD, the Office of Air and Radiation (OAR) and the Office of Pesticides and Poison Prevention (OPPTS) on this effort.
- C **"National Poison Prevention Week,"** with the Office of Pesticides and Poison Prevention.

Outside of EPA, the Aging Initiative continues to raise awareness of environmental hazards and the health of older adults by reaching out to Federal agencies, state, local and tribal governments, non-governmental organizations, aging and health organizations and health care professionals:

- C The **Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics**, has recently accepted **an indicator on the health effect of air pollution on the health of older adults**. The Aging Initiative has coordinated an interagency meeting with various Federal agencies to solicit guidance for the development of the National Agenda for the Environment and the Aging.
- C **The Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists**, with an EPA grant, is developing questions on environmental health hazards and older adults as part of the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System.

The Aging Initiative outreach strategy also includes:

- C **A comprehensive website** (www.epa.gov/aging),
- C **A 750-plus member listserve**, and
- C **Information dissemination on the interaction between environmental exposures and pre-existing diseases which may result in significant health benefits**. For example, the Aging Initiative partnered with the American Lung Association and the National Council on the Aging to develop a poster on COPD and asthma which has been distributed to 15,000 senior centers, 655 area agencies on aging, 57 state offices on aging, and hundreds of individuals and other aging and health organizations.
- C In 2002 the Aging Initiative sponsored a **National Academy of Sciences workshop on “Differential Susceptibility of Older People to Environmental Hazards”** which brought together experts in the field of aging, health and the environment to identify research needs to help guide EPA efforts.
- C EPA held six public listening sessions to obtain input for a National Agenda for the Environment and the Aging.
- C The Aging Initiative continues to work with members of the **Leadership Council of Aging Organizations** who represent the 50 major national aging organizations in the U.S., as well as Generations United, which is the nation’s foremost intergenerational organization, and academic institutions, including schools of public health, medical schools and nursing colleges.