



# ATSDR & NCEH Strategic Framework

2020 - 2024

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*Applying science to protect people and communities from environmental hazards*



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# A Note from the Director

Dr. Patrick Breysse

This strategic framework speaks to our core strengths as a leader in the field of environmental health.

We are all working to protect and improve people's health by reducing or eliminating environmental hazards — harnessing our collective strength both internally and externally, through our strong partnerships and collaborations with states, localities, tribes, territories, and the many organizations that work with and for them. This framework highlights ATSDR and NCEH's core strategies and capacities that each of our divisions and offices are undertaking to address hazardous exposures and improve health outcomes.

In tandem with the CDC's Strategic Workforce plan, this plan depends on a strong and diverse public health workforce. A well-trained and supported environmental public health workforce is our first line of defense to prevent disease, protect health, and keep people safe now and in the future. ATSDR and NCEH are committed to developing a strong and diverse internal workforce while also supporting the environmental health workforce pipeline.



We are also committed to innovation and technologies that propel the field forward in protecting communities from health hazards and addressing health inequities and environmental injustices.

It is with these tenets:

- intentionally building and supporting a strong and diverse workforce,
- harnessing the power of innovative solutions, and
- a dedication to identifying and addressing environmental health problems, issues of environmental justice, and health disparities

that I offer this strategic framework for the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry and CDC's National Center for Environmental Health.

# Strategic Framework



## BACKGROUND

This strategic framework speaks to our core beliefs and strengths as leaders in the field of environmental health. We are committed to using science, innovation, and partnerships to protect people and communities from environmental hazards. We are using this strategic framework to guide our work in preventing disease, addressing health inequities, protecting health, and keeping people safe now and in the future.

## Healthy People in a Healthy Environment

### Our Mission

ATSDR/NCEH protects people's health from environmental hazards that can be present in the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the world that sustains us. We do this by investigating the relationship between environmental factors and health, developing guidance, and building partnerships to support healthy decision making.

### 3 Key Tenets



#### Workforce Development

Intentionally building and supporting a strong and diverse workforce



#### Innovative Solutions

Harnessing the power of innovative solutions



#### Addressing EH Problems

Identifying and addressing environmental health problems, issues of environmental justice and reducing health disparities

### 8 Guiding Principles

Respect • Justice • Accountability • Societal Impact • Collaboration • Integrity  
 Forward Thinking & Innovation • Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

### 4 Core Strategies



#### Partner

with States & Communities



#### Investigate & Prevent

Environmental Hazards



#### Respond

to Emergencies



#### Translate

Science and Develop Best Practices

# Guiding Principles of Our Work



The guiding principles emerged from the strategic planning process and inform ATSDR and NCEH's work. These principles are embedded throughout the strategic framework and are foundational to ATSDR and NCEH's work.

## JUSTICE

We are committed to ensuring a healthy environment for all Americans, especially those who have been affected by systemic and systematic racism, discrimination, health inequities, and environmental injustices. We recognize that people of color can be more vulnerable to risks from poor environmental conditions and disproportionate amounts of contamination or harmful exposures and may not have equitable access to environmental benefits. We are committed to working with people of color and with marginalized and other socially vulnerable populations to address the systemic racism, institutional barriers, and root causes that create these injustices and inequities.

## FORWARD THINKING & INNOVATION

We encourage creativity and innovative thinking to advance public health practice and science. We provide national leadership as we focus on improvements and solutions to the most important environmental health problems. We proactively adopt and cultivate beliefs, actions and policies to foster scientific creativity and innovation.

## ACCOUNTABILITY

As diligent stewards of the funds entrusted to our agency, we act decisively and compassionately in service to people's health. To meet public and environmental health needs and achieve our public health goals, we ensure that our research and our services are based on sound science.

## SOCIETAL IMPACT

We advance public health impact by producing the most reliable science, expanding the environmental health science base, and building national, state, local, and tribal capacity to respond to environmental exposures and hazards. These coordinated efforts contribute to improved health outcomes and related quality of life in communities across our nation.

# Guiding Principles of Our Work

## DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

We are committed to facilitating and supporting a diverse and inclusive workplace— we recognize and acknowledge the privilege historically afforded to certain groups and we strive to provide the conditions and opportunities for socially marginalized groups to fully participate in all levels and aspects of our organization. We aim to create a workplace that is reflective of the communities we serve and to promote the diverse voices of our workforce. We understand that discrimination and systemic inequities have not provided everyone a seat at the table for decision-making, contributing, or participating. We seek to undo these structures of racism, inequities, and social injustices.

## RESPECT

We will maintain the utmost respect for the communities we serve as well as for those in the environmental health workforce who develop the science needed to protect the health of our nation.

## INTEGRITY

We are honest and ethical in all we do. We will do what we say. We fulfill our mission by providing relevant, timely products that reflect our commitment to collaboration and the highest standard of scientific quality and professional excellence.

## COLLABORATION

We share a common purpose. Knowing that we cannot achieve our vision by acting alone, we work cooperatively to leverage resources efficiently. Partnerships within NCEH and ATSDR, across CDC, and with states, territories, localities, tribes, key stakeholders, academic institutions, and other organizations are essential and highly valued.



# Partner with States and Communities

## OBJECTIVE:

**Partner with state/local/territorial health departments, tribal nations, and national and local organizations to provide expertise, guidance, and support to increase environmental health capability to reduce harmful environmental exposures and conduct environmental public health prevention programs and interventions.**

*ATSDR and NCEH's environmental health prevention programs and interventions protect and promote health through developing and maintaining partnerships and providing financial support, training and education, technical assistance, and expert subject matter consultation.*



## Strategies Across ATSDR & NCEH

- Investigating exposures to environmental chemicals and chemical and radiologic threat agents
- Building additional national, state, local, and tribal capacity to anticipate, assess, and/or respond to naturally occurring and hazardous environmental exposures, chemical spills, and hazardous waste sites
- Developing evidence-based environmental public health strategies and interventions
- Promoting adoption and implementation of environmental public health prevention practices
- Providing funding, training, proficiency testing, and method transfer to public health laboratories
- Partnering with communities to help address concerns about environmental exposures and providing resources to build community capacity to anticipate, assess, and respond to environmental exposures

# Investigate & Prevent Environmental Hazards



## OBJECTIVE:

**Improve health outcomes by monitoring and investigating environmental public health threats and their health effects through modern surveillance systems, laboratory analysis, exposure and health studies, and informatics for data-driven decisions.**

*ATSDR and NCEH use national program surveillance, Geographic Information System (GIS), our Environmental Public Health Tracking program, health studies, consultations, assessments, and research studies to understand, prevent, and respond to potentially hazardous environmental exposures in communities and vulnerable populations throughout the nation.*

## Strategies Across ATSDR & NCEH

- Using data science to track environmental trends  
In order to provide insight and inform decision-making about emerging environmental issues
- Identifying in which populations adverse human health or environmental effects disproportionately occur, notably socially vulnerable communities, ethnic and racial minorities, and other special-emphasis groups
- Building additional national, state, local, and tribal capacity to anticipate, assess, and respond to environmental exposures
- Identifying and developing environmental public health data sets, methodologies, and tools to assess exposures, health outcomes, and public health actions
- Enhancing surveillance capabilities to detect existing and emerging environmental public health threats
- Developing, improving, and harmonizing laboratory tests for measuring biomarkers of environmental, tobacco-related, newborn, opioid-related, and chronic diseases to better detect, treat, and prevent exposures and disease
- Applying unique laboratory tests to regularly assess Americans' nutrition status, exposure to environmental chemicals, and risk for chronic disease, including studies of vulnerable populations



# Respond to Emergencies

## OBJECTIVE:

**Monitor and effectively respond to environmental public health hazards, emergencies, and threats that affect domestic and international health security and build appropriate capacity within state, local, territorial and tribal communities.**

*ATSDR and NCEH respond to environmental emergencies including chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear incidents; hazardous substance exposure; natural disasters; and extreme weather events. ATSDR/NCEH also educates and trains emergency response officials and helps communities with preparation and recovery.*

## Strategies Across ATSDR & NCEH



- Ensuring accurate and timely delivery of information to communities to protect health and prevent future exposures
- Providing 24/7 regional domestic support to communities experiencing environmental health hazards, emergencies, and threats
- Responding to emergencies while maintaining and adapting critical environmental health prevention programs and interventions
- Engaging community members and stakeholders with common environmental public health interests in emergencies
- Collaborating across the federal family and across sectors to prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies, and encouraging cross-sector strategies that can be used at the state and local levels, including Health in All Policies strategies
- Developing and applying rapid and accurate laboratory tests that support the public health response to emergencies involving chemical threats, radiologic threats, and toxins
- Conducting and supporting studies on environmental public health hazards, exposures, and health outcomes
- Providing effective laboratory support for CDC emergency responses that involve known or potential exposure to environmental chemicals
- Promoting adoption and implementation of environmental public health best practices



**ATSDR & NCEH Core Strategies**

# Translate Science & Develop Best Practices



## OBJECTIVE:

**Improve guidance, education, and implementation of best practices to prevent and reduce exposure to harmful chemicals through research, translation of the highest quality scientific findings, and building the environmental health evidence base.**

*ATSDR and NCEH develop data-driven, science-based resources, tools, and guidance to provide the latest scientific evidence to individuals, communities, public health/health care professionals, and partners affected by environmental hazards. ATSDR/NCEH makes recommendations and evaluates public health actions and practices based on the quality scientific evidence generated.*

## Strategies Across ATSDR & NCEH



- Strengthening collaboration and communicating with key stakeholders and partners to assess environmental health concerns and share vital environmental health information with communities
- Ensuring accurate and timely delivery of information to communities to protect health and prevent future exposures
- Developing evidence-based environmental public health strategies and interventions, including strategies that address identified health inequities which disproportionately occur in low-income and racial and ethnic minority populations
- Promoting adoption and implementation of environmental public health prevention practices
- Evaluating public health prevention actions and practices
- Collaborating with partner organizations to promote laboratory best practice