EPA/CDC/ATSDR Community Environmental Health Collaboration

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) collaboration, in partnership with state and local governments, uses a community-centered approach to build healthy communities. Creating effective and sustainable solutions to environmental public health problems requires community capacity at the local level.

EPA/CDC/ATSDR collaborative activities will strengthen coordination between environmental protection and public health programs. Such collaboration will reduce overlap and add synergy to ongoing community-based activities. The three agencies will work to optimize resource use, coordinate assistance directed to communities to ensure safety and promote health, and develop collaborative strategies that assist communities coping with health problems that may be related to environmental hazards.

Common goals and values of the EPA/CDC/ATSDR collaboration include

- Promoting healthy communities
- Addressing multiple public and ecologic health aspects of built and natural environments
- Reducing health disparities
- Decreasing environmental health hazards for vulnerable populations (children and elderly)
- Improving environmental health literacy
- Promoting environmental justice

Pilot Communities

Boston, Massachusetts: EPA and CDC staff will collaborate with the Boston Public Health Commission on its Safe Shops project to reduce emissions from the estimated 600 auto shops clustered in low-income neighborhoods. EPA funds the testing of safer alternatives to toxic materials as well as health and environmental education for shop workers. CDC funds a variety of health-related projects including a mobile health van that provides health screenings to targeted auto body and repair shop workers.

Continued on next page

Community Environmental Health Collaboration, Continued

Cerro Gordo, Iowa: ATSDR and CDC, as well as other federal, state, and local volunteers, are collaborating with the community to implement the assessment process using the Protocol for Assessing Community Excellence in Environmental Health (PACE EH). Current collaborative activities include

- developing a process to prioritize environmental health issues that are being identified using a communitywide survey instrument and
- designing a template to use in the development of issue profiles that will be prioritized by local citizens.

The Cherokee Nation, Oklahoma: EPA and CDC/ATSDR are collaborating with the Cherokee Nation, which is made up of 14 counties in northeast Oklahoma. The Cherokee Nation and CDC/ATSDR work in collaboration with the Cherokee Nation Clinics and Indian Health Service Hospitals to provide screening and early detection in breast and cervical cancer.

Grand Rapids/Kent County, Michigan: EPA and CDC will assist the Healthy Homes Coalition of Western Michigan, Western Michigan Environmental Action Council, Asthma Network of Western Michigan, and Kent County Health Department in developing a Healthy Homes Initiative in Grand Rapids.

Savannah, Georgia: ATSDR is conducting public health activities in the Hudson Hill, Woodville and West Savannah neighborhoods, in response to local residents' health concerns about increases of cancer, respiratory illnesses, asthma, and skin rashes. ATSDR's activities include two health consultations, community updates, and health education workshops. As part of the pilot, EPA, CDC, and ATSDR staff will work to build community capacity to address health issues that arise through ATSDR's public health consultation processes. ATSDR will assist the communities with developing partnerships with industries, businesses, and federal, state and local agencies.

Selection of Pilot Communities

The pilot collaboration sites, which range from urban centers to rural areas, were selected for the project because they had

- strong local leadership in addressing community issues,
- experience working with a range of private and public sector partners, and
- a track record of successfully addressing local health or environmental issues.

Lessons learned from the pilot sites will form the basis for a federal model of collaboration to improve service delivery for community-based environmental health activities at the national level. Information gathered and tools developed will also expand our community-based tool kits and be used to develop targeted training and education for leadership development.

More Information

For more information about the EPA/CDC/ATSDR collaboration, go to http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/CEHA/collaboration.htm.

October 2007