

Fall 2009 Annual SEHD Meeting

October 28-29, 2010

ASTHO SEHD Steering Committee

Lisa Conti, FL

Cliff Mitchell, MD

John Linc Stine, MN

Suzanne Condon, MA

Gregg Grunenfelder, WA

Ken Sharp, IA

Diane Eckles, AZ

Jack Daniel, NE

Tim Ryan, WY (New Member!)

I. EPA's Office of Children's Health Protection (Peter Grevatt, EPA/OCHP)

Where is EPA headed in terms of child environmental health issues?

- Time of change
- 3 broad principles across programs outlined by L. Jackson
 1. Following rule of law, enforcement
 2. Making sure everything is based on best science
 3. Transparency
- 5 broad areas of children's health
 1. Air quality standards
 2. Safe chemicals management
 3. Implementation of children's environmental health activities; i.e. healthy home programs, health school programs
 4. Science priorities – National Children's Study, Children's health research centers, chemical risk assessment for children (figuring out the appropriate approach)
 5. Measurement, how do we figure out the overall health outcomes of kids across the nation? How do we measure? Better tracking over time and informing future agenda
- Success in EPA requires partnerships with the broader public health workforce
- SEHD's can help EPA set agenda priorities
- Challenge: breaking down barriers between programs within EPA and outside of EPA, within states as well

Discussion

- One way EPA could help state health agencies is by laying out a consistent message to state environmental agencies to work closely with state public health agencies and give them funds to do so
- EPA doesn't seem to be talking about race and income as predictors of health. And EPA's priorities don't align with state priorities at all. EPA seems to be disconnected from the public health community. → Peter suggested focusing on single issue/project that public health community and EPA could work on together to build relationship
- Is "Tools for Schools" part of your priorities? Great program to introduce public health into educational system. → EPA is working actively with Department of Education to push this program, schools will be an important focus for EPA in the next few years

- There is not nearly enough funding for “Tools for schools,” to be sustainable program. What is the funding future for the program? → Administrator has lots of interest in this area but funding decisions for future are hard to predict.

II. **Discussion of National Conversation on Chemical Exposures and Chemical Reform (Julie Fishman/Ben Gerhardstein, ATSDR/CDC)**

Updates on National Conversation

- NCEH conference was a good opportunity to move the issue along, there was a booth dedicated to the project to disseminate information and take comments
- Since meeting this summer, workgroups have been established and have had initial calls, in November all workgroups will be meeting in person, following that they are developing a few engagement mechanisms
 1. Community engagement toolkit: getting community feedback
 2. Web discussion platform: gain feedback input from public on broader basis
- Timeline isn't completely set
- Final product will be a report created by workgroups which will be synthesized into action agenda, be made publicly available hopefully by next Spring, and will be open to comments and feedback

Discussion

- With TSCA reform quickly approaching, is there going to be a way for the National Conversation to play a role in this? → The policy and practices workgroup is struggling with this issue currently, no consensus has been reached, the National Conversation should play the role of advocating the important public health role in TSCA reform, National Conversation could play important role of bringing public health voice into TSCA reform debate
- Frustration by communities towards government/industry; wildly different expectations; dynamic needs to be re-thought and re-created → ATSDR staff recognize problem, actively trying to involve communities, bringing together issue of environmental justice with legacy of problems and applying them to future development. Embracing a holistic approach to community engagement (broadening public health focus to those issues most severely effecting community, i.e. HIV, obesity, etc.)
- Will draft reports be open to public? → Yes, process will be as transparent as possible.
- ASTHO will be helping to create a state forum in which state representatives who were not chosen to be on workgroups will have an opportunity to share input with state staff who are on workgroups who will act as liaisons, winter time frame.

III. Priority III: Workforce Development – 2009 Activities and Evaluation (Ken Sharp, Iowa, and Chuck Warzecha, Wisconsin on phone)

- Established in March meeting from priorities discussed then.
- Lots of challenges, retirement, budget cuts, etc.
- Have been meeting once a month since March.
- What is this workgroup going to do? → Develop a white paper, a position paper, that focuses on the fact that there are a lot of groups out there focusing on workforce issues.
- Dan interviewed representatives from several organizations.
- Conclusions: Number of different efforts out there but no centralized, coordinated plan on workforce development issues.
- Overarching goal: Develop a broad national coalition, with all partners, to work with coalition to carry out a number of strategies outlined in position paper
- Outlined objectives of position statement

Discussion

- Summer internship at NCEH may be a good model to replicate at state schools around country
- Kentucky has had success with academic institutions in creating a program similar to NCEH; there is a need to evaluate best practices from different programs to ensure value and worth for both the student and sponsoring agency
- The loss of a general commitment to public service needs to be addressed, re-emphasized to younger generation
- There is a lot of disparity between local health departments, which can pay more than state health departments
- Workforce issues have risen to the top of the Environmental Health Policy Committee and ASTHO, as well as NACHHO and APHA, are working on Environmental Health messaging
- There is a lack of post-training fellowships (CSTE and EIS as models) in EH, a need to model similar fellowships
- This is a problem not unique to environmental health, but we need to focus on the economics of having to replace trained workforce; focus on visibility
- Fighting a 20-30 year trend to fight less government intervention
- Georgia has developed marketing material around workforce development and will share with group
- The workforce group initially struggled but now has an idea about the role ASTHO and SEHD can play to develop a nationally centralized plan; will hopefully mature into a position statement and future work will be to look at ways to implement the position statement and action plan

IV. **Priority II: Safe Water – 2009 Activities and Evaluation**

What have we accomplished since 2009 meeting?

- Water priorities survey
- VGB Act – major challenge, working with CPSC, which is not communicating or working collaboratively with states
- Assisting in drinking water advisory project – active effort to create toolkit that would help state and local health departments issue drinking water advisories

What tasks are currently underway?

- CPSC letter
- ICC – Pool codes
- Renewed interest in infrastructure re-building, \$1.4 billion available in state revolving fund; how do we tie green projects to sustainable infrastructure projects? Need to incorporate that notion of green to tie into public health priorities to receive more funding

Lauren Lewis, Health Studies Branch (NCEH/CDC)

- Our program is the only one that receives money from Congress on water safety research
- One priority has been responsive to Congressional mandates to water-borne diseases
- New initiative: want to provide funding to states to address your needs of state, private well issues has been a major, reoccurring theme. One project that has been identified is a well data repository, building on USGS data, making it more comprehensive, more standardized, more accessible to states; GIS mapping data would be included as well as water quality and well characteristics. Part of what we're proposing is following tracking model.

Other topics of interest/discussion

- Labeling requirements on Atrazine
- Green Projects + infrastructure
- Small system water affordability
- Disinfectant products – alternative disinfectants to chlorine
- New area of research: Fe6 as potential wastewater disinfectant, very promising
- The EPA groundwater rule is very challenging for states, would like to see them push back (unfunded mandates in general)
- Challenges with private well data: (1) well owners will say it's proprietary business information, sharing would pose conflict when it comes to competitions with other owners; (2) lab capacity; (3) difficult to get people to participate in a broader reporting system with water
- With well data depository, it would be beneficial to research the private well landscape with USGS surveys and state information; get picture of what information is already available before doing a survey
- Small community systems have proliferated in the past, EPA has been slow in acknowledging the value of these systems

- PBC exposure through pipes
- Decentralized wastewater management
- Harmful algae blooms
- Concerns for workgroup → Timeline of actions, finding time to actively participate

The Safe Water Work Group will continue through 2010, safe water issues will always be important

V. Environmental Public Health Tracking – Judy Qualters, NCEH/CDC

- National portal launched on July 4, 2009, states have also launched
- Got great media coverage
- Moving forward: improved data, new data, enhanced user interface, more automated data processing, secure portal
- Data ready to go: birth defects, cancer measures, modeled air data, carbon monoxide mortality, and reproductive health outcomes
- Validating air quality data
- 2006 data should be up by December
- Interface enhancement: improving query interface, original testing indicated people get lost and need additional help navigating
- Automated Data processing: decrease burden, increase accuracy, enforce standards, promote data awareness among data stewards, allow immediate feedback
- Improve current data measures:
 1. Ozone
 2. PM2.5
 3. Water – revise community water quality measures to focus on concentration data, provide data by community water systems
- Exploring new data: 2 new teams → climate change and pesticides
 1. Climate change
 - Starting with heat related data
 - Working with NASA for getting land temperature and land use data
 - Internal partnership with air/respiratory health data
 2. Pesticides
 - Started discussions with American Association of Poison Control Centers
- Linking health and environment: What are the methods we use?
 1. Environmental gradients: How do we extrapolate population risks from data?
 2. HIAs
 3. Academic Partners data linkage projects: goal → What are the methods we can use and translate into working risk assessment, giving people experience in collecting and analyzing data
 - Berkeley: heat
 - Tulane: asthma
 - Pittsburgh: sources of pollutants, blood lead levels

- New Jersey: pollution and reproductive health outcomes
- Efforts to expand Network
 1. Six new states were funded this year
 2. Outreach to unfunded states
 - *How to Guide*
 - Mentorship program through ASTHO and NACCHO
 - CSTE annual meeting workshop
 - Data steward organizations
 - Regional Meetings

Discussion

- We need to be thinking proactively about how people (general public) are going to want to use this information; input from communities
- What interests epidemiologists is not always what interests community groups
- Fruitful discussion should be had with Peter Gravett at EPA because child environmental health indicators are very important
- People doing HIA at CDC don't understand holistic environmental model, comprehensive assessment is not being done, re-emphasis needs to be addressed

VI. **Chinese Drywall**

- www.DrywallResponse.gov – All reports associated with investigation will be accessible through this website
- Conclusion from report is that they haven't been able to pinpoint exactly what's happening with the drywall; Tests show high level of sulfide; no tests have shown high levels of radiation
- There are concerns from residents that if you call the Feds about this problem it becomes public record and a few people have had their insurance companies deny them coverage; privacy issues
- Health symptoms: irritation generally, FL is collecting data on pets who have also been exposed; odor threshold for sulfide was breached → could be causing symptoms (Lisa Conti)

Partner Updates

1. National Council of State Legislatures (NCSL) – Doug Farquhar
 - Party control over Congress is not very predictive of environmental health progress
 - Recession has effected every state, novel, with a lot more impact on local level
 - Local jurisdictions are giving up environmental responsibilities due to budget issues, puts pressure on state legislatures
 - Have not seen a downturn on number of environmental health related bills, looking at same level of issues, number staying constant
 - Trends: pressure on state legislatures to deal with chemical reform, bio-monitoring

- EPA lead renovation rule will have a big impact once people become aware of it
 - Lacking sophisticated group of legislatures who have solid background in science; legislatures are not well aware of what environmental public health is
2. National Institute for Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) – Liam O’Fallon
 - Maintaining database and website
 - Evaluate quality of materials
 - Disseminate and develop materials
 - Coordinate environmental public health services
 - Community linked infrastructure – 3 year award, established linkages and sustainable connections between research and local health clinic needs
 - Wants more input on what states find useful
 3. American Public Health Association (APHA) – Amanda Raziano
 - ATSDR Green book
 - 6 part climate change webinar series → planning on creating booklet based on webinar
 - Working with NCEH/ATSDR on National Conversation – trying to engage more community stakeholders and providing materials to stimulate community dialogue
 - Transportation re-authorization bill; public health weigh in
 - Food Safety coalition
 - Environmental Health Coalition
 - Working with EH tracking program; developing toolkit to help states and staff better articulate what the program is and does
 - APHA Annual Meeting, November 8-11th, 2009

Discussion

- How is NIEHS driving academic partnerships with states?
- NIEHS needs to have better communication with states regarding their research
- Are there any state public officials on NIEHS advisory board?
- NCSL – is their public health relevant information on website and if so how easy is it to access → Google search for state environmental health legislation is best way to be linked directly to NCSL relevant info, annual published results are also sent to various organizations

VII. **Priority I: Indoor Environments – 2009 Activities and Evaluation** (Cliff Mitchell, MD)

- There is a need to address the scarcity of tools for measuring Indoor Environmental Quality (IEQ) and in the enforcement of healthy housing regulations.
- The work group is in the process of finalizing a draft position statement on *Model Indoor Environmental Quality Policies*
- The position statement recommends actions to address the following issues: lack of regulatory framework, the need for a collaborative approach, health disparities, model codes, staffing issues and IEQ research

- Specific infrastructure recommendations for federal agencies was recently added to the position statement based on talks with CDC, HUD and EPA
- Next steps with the position statement would involve sending it the EHPC and the Executive committee for final approval
- A new priority of the work group is to conduct a needs assessment of IEQ programs across all states.

VIII. **Emerging Issues for State Environmental Health Programs**

- Environmental Health Policy Committee (EHPC) priorities:
 1. Healthy Community Design
 2. Climate Change
 3. Chemical exposure/reform/bio-monitoring
 4. Safe food and water
 5. Environmental public health workforce
- Re-invigorate HIA focus; perhaps consider different nomenclature, HIA has some negative baggage association
- An HIA-related workgroup hasn't had much success; ASTHO is currently funding 4 state on health community design with HIA specific component [Oregon (continued grantee), Wisconsin, Minnesota and California]; maybe we should look broader than healthy community and look at broader environmental determinants of health
- Updating Healthy People 2010, how do we make sure environmental health has equal piece of that action? Mainstreaming environmental health into broader public health should be goal
- Suzanne Condone (MA) volunteered to help coordinate next steps in HIA reinvigoration
- Other countries are actively doing HIA assessments at state level and it wouldn't be hard to reach across the pond to allies in other countries.
- 1st step: Getting the environmental health folks together and deciding what we think is most important and getting input from outside US to help generate a working model
- Food safety: lots of recalls this year with increased legislative activity, food safety has traditionally been a core service of public health but currently permitting responsibility lies strongly with ag agencies, how do we re-define public health role?
- FDA currently has lots of money to give to inspection efforts, funds for developing rapid response for food emergencies are available; good base to receive funding is to have a food safety working group involving state labs, health agencies and others.
- How to sell importance of environmental health to legislatures? → we should centralize a "what to give legislatures," document, fact sheets, materials that promote EH cause, bumper sticker answer = "Environmental protection protects environment from people, environmental health protects people from environment.
- Sometimes enthusiasm from industrial community is helpful
- One useful strategy is to refer to it as health protection

- There should be a mechanism created to share current struggles, best practices with administrative/political issues
- Accreditation challenges: most likely everyone will have to be accredited, will probably be a necessity to receive federal funds; public health performance standards are the key to being accredited currently; Ken Sharp is good resource to keep up-to-date on accreditation progress
- Interstate chemical clearing house – identifying priority chemicals, useful to generate discussions between states about chemical priorities
- A lot of money is available for Health Information Transfer (Or technology?) – potential for integration

IX. 2010 Priorities for SEHD

- Water
 1. Applicability of standards for small water systems
 2. Disinfection products
 3. PCPPs
 4. On-site wastewater management
 5. Rick Rumba was added to safe water work group list serve
- Workforce
 1. States with workforce plan should share with workgroup
 2. For workforce white paper, in terms of enumeration of EH workforce, we should identify what agencies they work for and what funding they receive
- Indoor Environmental Quality
 1. Will try to get CDC to be the lead on creating national needs assessment with input from NAACHO and ASTHO
- National Conversation
 1. Will pull out state contacts from workgroup lists to help guide future discussion and additional comments from non-workgroup members
- General
 1. Database management issues
 2. Regional coordination
 3. Greater outreach to states who have not traditionally participated in SEHD
 4. Setting up meeting between environmental health directors and SHOs or perhaps more realistically senior deputy group
 5. Future ECOS collaboration, working with EPA to strengthen partnership