



At a Glance

Catalyst for Improving the Environment

Why We Did This Review

We initiated this review to evaluate the status of corrective actions taken by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in response to an Office of Inspector General report on the EPA's Office of Children's Health Protection (OCHP) issued in 2004.

Background

OCHP was established in 1997 to formalize and integrate EPA's efforts on behalf of children. OCHP's role is to coordinate those efforts with other government agencies, and to carry out Executive Order 13045 and the National Agenda to Protect Children's Health from Environmental Threats.

For further information, contact our Office of Congressional, Public Affairs and Management at (202) 566-2391.

To view the full report, click on the following link:
www.epa.gov/oig/reports/2010/20100405-10-P-0095.pdf

Need Continues for a Strategic Plan to Protect Children's Health

What We Found

Five years after providing OCHP with recommendations related to the strategic and annual planning processes, agreed-to corrective actions have not been completed. According to OCHP, which is now the Office of Children's Health Protection and Environmental Education (OCHPEE), corrective actions have not been implemented due to constant turnover in office directors, one of whom claimed that the corrective actions were completed prior to closing the recommendations. If these corrective actions were implemented, OCHPEE would be able to demonstrate, on an annual basis, its impact on the protection of children's health. However, OCHPEE's lack of strategic planning, identified goals, adequate measures, and quantifiable accomplishments result in its inability to demonstrate its role and value added to the protection of children's health.

We believe that the unimplemented and agreed-to recommendations are still valid. The Agency's new five-point agenda for protecting children's health requires a reevaluation of the role of OCHPEE, as well as a redefinition of its function and areas of responsibility within the Agency. If OCHPEE is unable to demonstrate its impact on children's health protection, the Agency leadership should evaluate whether these resources could be better used by other program offices that target children's environmental health challenges.

What We Recommend

We recommend that the EPA Deputy Administrator implement agreed-to corrective actions, which include developing a strategic plan, improving annual planning, establishing measures, and reporting its results and outcomes toward meeting the Agency's National Agenda to Protect Children's Health from Environmental Threats; or devolve to other program offices the functions and resources of OCHPEE.

We also recommend that the Deputy Administrator verify that the current audit follow-up process is in compliance with EPA Manual 2750.

The Agency agreed with the recommendation. The Agency agreed to implement the agreed-to corrective actions upon completion of the reorganization of OCHPEE. The Agency also stated that the verification of the follow-up process has been completed.