

# U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 6

## Children's Environmental Health Fifth Annual Program Highlights Report

*Protecting Children Where They Live, Learn, and Play*



October 2014 - September 2015

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# Introduction

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## A New Strategic Approach to Children's Health Protection

Early in 2015, EPA published the first Agency ***Strategy for Protecting Children's Health: FY 2015-FY2018*** to help make children's health considerations a key part of our day-to-day operations. The Strategy grew out of an Agency-wide coordination with all national programs and regional offices, several months of planning calls, and an in-person meeting in Washington, DC during Children's Health Month with the Children's Health Coordinators from EPA regions across the country.



The strategy is ground-breaking because for the first time, it pulls together children's health-specific objectives, measures, and indicators under each of the five Agency goals and four cross-cutting strategies:

### **EPA Goals**

- Addressing Climate Change and Improving Air Quality
- Protecting America's Waters
- Cleaning up Communities and Advancing Sustainable Development
- Ensuring the Safety of Chemicals and Preventing Pollution
- Protecting Human Health and the Environment by Enforcing Laws and Assuring Compliance

### **Cross Agency Strategies**

- Working Toward a Sustainable Future
- Working to Make a Visible Difference in Communities
- Launching a New Era of State, Tribal, Local, and International Partnerships
- Embracing EPA as a High-Performing Organization

In addition, it allows Regions to capture work that might not otherwise be measured under mandatory Annual Commitment System metrics, or other program measures and indicators.

To promote knowledge and use of the strategy in Region 6, the Children's Health Coordinator accompanied Regional Administrator, Ron Curry to several All-Hands Division meetings this summer, and introduced the strategy to each Division. During Children's Health Month in October, an All Employee memo was sent out reinforcing the importance of the new strategy. The strategy is available on EPA's internal SharePoint site at: [https://usepa.sharepoint.com/sites/OA/ochp/Shared%20Documents/EPA Strategy to Protect Children's Environmental Health FY15-18 final.pdf](https://usepa.sharepoint.com/sites/OA/ochp/Shared%20Documents/EPA%20Strategy%20to%20Protect%20Children's%20Environmental%20Health%20FY15-18%20final.pdf)

# Introduction

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## Summary of Results

The Children's Health Symposium held in El Paso this fall accomplished several goals. Approximately **135 health care providers were trained** potentially impacting 100 patients per provider and ultimately improving health outcomes for 13,500 people in border communities. In addition, 1) The Symposium raised awareness and increased the understanding of the role of the Pediatric Environmental Health Speciality Units among stakeholders; 2) It facilitated the understanding of children's environmental health (CEH) issues along the US/Mexico Border among Agency leaders to better address problems facing the children in some of the poorest communities in the nation; and 3) It addressed several measures in the EPA Strategy for Protecting Children's Health and Annual Commitment System measures, meeting target numbers for FY14.

Outreach on pesticide exposure to migrant students, teachers, and families along the border reached an audience of approximately **1,000 people** and an environmental health fair in Arkansas reached more than **500 children** and in the school environment, EPA trained and provided technical assistance to **450 people** including school nurses, district administrators, facilities management, pest management professionals, building and construction professionals, and others.

During Children's Health Month, **dozens of teachers and hundreds of families** received information about how to protect children from environmental health risks; during *Lead Poisoning Prevention Week*, the last week of October, Region 6 distributed **11,000 lead planners** to raise awareness about the Renovation, Repair, and Painting Rule and childhood lead poisoning.

More than **218 professionals** were trained in the two-day *Essentials for Healthy Home Practitioners* course and *Eco-Healthy Child Care* (and *Lunch and Learn* series) training for supervisors. These **train-the-trainer** events focus on providing the tools that child care supervisors and public housing and environmental professionals need to be change agents for improving environmental health conditions of thousands of families across the nation.

This year, the Region 6 **Circuit Rider** traveled to more than 110 communities and met with more than **135** individuals at city/county health or environmental offices, schools, libraries, and clinics, provided information at 6 health fairs or community events.

Children's health messages were disseminated via Face Book, Twitter, Blogs, online articles, radio broadcasts, webcasts, and press releases reaching **thousands** of parents, teachers, health care providers, and the general public. Increasing the audience through these mechanisms has provided an expanded reach of EPA's message to protect children from environmental health risks where they live, learn, and play.

# Children's Health on the Border

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EPA is working with partners along the US/Mexico Border to address binational environmental challenges and disproportionate health impacts that burden border communities. Health impacts include poor indoor and outdoor air quality, mismanagement of pesticides, misuse of chemicals and other waste, poor water quality, and binational chemical emergencies.

## First EPA Children's Health Symposium on the Border

EPA launched Children's Health Month on September 24-25, 2015 by co-hosting, ***Children's Environmental Health on the Border: Protecting Children Where They Live, Learn, and Play***, a bi-national symposium was held on the campus of Texas Tech in El Paso, and hosted by the Southwest Center for Pediatric Environmental Health. Texas Tech is a new EPA partner and now home to the newest Pediatric Environmental Health Speciality Unit (PEHSU).

The PEHSU is a network of physicians jointly funded by EPA and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry. The symposium utilized the PEHSU network to put on the training and Texas Tech provided continuing education credits for attendees. About **150 doctors, nurses, promotoras, and public health professionals attended the two-day session** in which thirty experts presented on issues such as asthma, lead and mercury exposure, climate change impacts on children's health and a dozen other topics. Simultaneous English/Spanish translation was provided for all the presentations.



## Results

Protecting kid's health is central to EPA's mission and the symposium was one of many CEH initiatives along the Border. Together with our partners at state agencies, universities, non-profits, and local municipalities, EPA has been working to specifically address children's health protection in border communities. The US/Mexico Border program (Regions 6 and 9) has provided funding to assist a dozen organizations, with more than **\$500,000 over the past three years specifically to address children's health**. Funding has supported capacity-building through training for child care and school personnel, for environmental home assessments, to educate farm workers about take-home pesticide exposures, and to train those who train others. Directly, these efforts have impacted about **25,000 people**. However, when a *promotora* carries the message about children's health protection into a community, or physicians hear about children's health protection in grand rounds, on via on-line training, they may have long-term impacts within a community. **So, 25,000 people trained becomes 35,000, or even 50,000 or more reached.**



# Children's Health on the Border

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## Protecting Farm Workers and Their Families

The Region 6 Pesticides Program continues to add safe work practices among farm workers, especially children. Region 6 provided support for the play, *El Moscas y Los Pesticidas* to be performed on May 27, and June 3, 2015. It was performed and hosted by *Telon De Arena* at the Chamizal National Memorial, an urban park located in El Paso, Texas. *El Moscas y Los Pesticidas* is a humorous and interactive play (in Spanish) developed by Region 6 in 2009 to help increase pesticide safety awareness for farm workers and prevent "take-home" risks to their families. At least three schools consisting of 4th, 5th and 6th grade students from El Paso TX and Las Cruces NM attended the performance.



## Results

Before and after the play, pre-and-post evaluation forms were distributed to the audience to assess the audience's knowledge gained through the play. Based on the final report, the post evaluation forms show an overall increase on pesticides safety awareness knowledge. This project reached an audience of approximately **1,000 people** including migrant students and teachers.

## New Pesticides Rule Proposed

Reaching far beyond the US/Mexico Border area, EPA issued a proposal to revise the Certification of Pesticide Applicators rule on August 5, 2015. The proposed rule strengthens training and certification standards for pesticide applicators who are certified to apply the riskiest pesticides, known as restricted use pesticides (RUPs). Federal regulations require applicators to be certified in order to apply RUPs. Additionally, RUPs may be used only by, or under the direct supervision of, certified applicators. The proposed rule also establishes a first time-ever nation-wide **minimum age of 18** for certified applicators and persons working under their direct supervision. The goal is to reduce the likelihood of harm from the misapplication of RUPs and ensure a consistent level of protection among states. EPA is accepting comments on the revised rule until November 23, 2015. For more information, visit the website. <http://www2.epa.gov/pesticide-worker-safety/epa-proposes-stronger-standards-people-applying-riskiest-pesticides>

## Children's Health Month

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Throughout October, EPA places special emphasis on children's environmental health issues. EPA staff participated in several outreach events to recognize Children's Health Month in FY14. Region 6 has an ongoing partnership with the **Perot Museum of Nature and Science** which resulted in three key events in FY15.

- EPA staffed a booth during Perot's, Teachers Open House on the evening of October 3<sup>rd</sup>, sharing information on *SunWise*, Clean, Green, and Healthy Schools, and environmental education programs. In addition to speaking to several dozen teachers, Region 6 received 53 follow up calls for additional information.
- Regional Administrator, Ron Curry introduced a live webinar produced on-site in the museum's *Being Human Hall*, featuring a presentation by Dr. Sala Senkayi on childhood leukemia.
- In February, the Region 6 Children's Health and Special Emphasis programs came together with the Perot Museum to recognize Black History Month and Engineers Week. EPA hosted a fascinating program with special guests, NASA astronaut Colonel Benjamin Alvin Drew and Tuskegee Airman Lt. Calvin Spann.



EPA partnered with the City of Dallas to promote Children's Health Month by distributing children's health posters at *Green Fest on the Bridge*. The family event day on the Continental Avenue Pedestrian bridge showcased informational booths on conservation, recycling, sustainability, and healthy lifestyles.

During Lead Poisoning Prevention Week, also in October, Region 6 distributed 11,000 lead planners to raise awareness about the Renovation, Repair, and Painting Rule and childhood lead poisoning. In addition to the planners, CEH materials were sent to Arkansas and Border communities to support their outreach efforts.

Dallas, Children's Health presentations were made at Habitat for Humanity, the Health and Wellness Alliance for Children, and the West Dallas Coalition meeting.

The Children's Health Coordinator published a blog for the EPA website on *Healthy Homes and Environmental Justice* and it was picked up by the online Internally, a memo was sent to employees encouraging them to take the voluntary children's health training, and the Children's Health Coordinator represented Region 6 at children's health strategy meetings in Washington, DC, and the Children's Environmental Health Symposium in Central Texas.

# Healthy Schools

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Making schools a safer place for children to learn is an important role for EPA, and several programs address healthy school environments by providing guidance that schools may choose to follow. There are numerous tools available for parents, teachers, school nurses, administrators, facilities personnel and others to be able to make informed choices about protecting students and staff from potentially dangerous contaminants. For information about air quality, healthy buildings, transportation issues, chemicals and a comprehensive set of suggested guidelines for school environmental health, visit the EPA schools website at <http://www2.epa.gov/schools>.

## Pesticide Safety and Integrated Pest Management in Schools

In 2012, EPA released its *Strategic and Implementation Plans for School Integrated Pest Management* for FY12-14. This document, the *FY 2011-2015 EPA Strategic Plan*, and the *US EPA Region 6 Pesticides Program 2012-2015 Integrated Pest Management Program Action Plan* were the foundation for all Region 6 pesticide safety and integrated pest management (IPM) in schools activities.



## Stakeholder and Regional Collaboration

The Region 6 Pesticides Program continued to focus its pesticide safety and IPM in schools efforts to promote a “wholesale” approach to establishing sustainable and verifiable programs that mitigate pests and reduce reliance on pesticides. This included serving on the Southern IPM Center’s Advisory Council, and collaborating and consulting the Southern IPM Center’s IPM in Schools working group which represents State Lead Agency, Extension Services, and industry in the southern States, to include Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas. Region 6 staff drafted an updated version of the US EPA “*Pest Control in the School Environment: Adopting a Pest Management Program*” which will be available soon for use by schools across the nation. Region 6 continued to expand its regional stakeholder outreach to include representatives and groups from the school health sector to include school health nurses, state health department school and adolescent health programs, university public health researchers, and not-for-profit organizations focused on improving health outcomes for children.

In FY 2015, Region 6 further expanded its **Pesticide Safety and School IPM in Indian Country** outreach and consultation capacity by including pesticide safety and IPM in schools in its cooperative grant with the Eight Northern Indian Pueblo Council (ENIPC). The ENIPC provides outreach, training, and consultation to 22 Pueblos and Tribes



## Healthy Schools

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throughout New Mexico. Region 6 representatives participated in three separate collaboration meetings with the Bureau of Indian Affairs environmental program and Indian Health Service environmental health regional staffs to promote pesticide safety and IPM in Tribal schools. Consultative outreach included a review and comment on the school IPM plan developed by Bernalillo Public Schools, NM, site assessment and technical assistance to Cochiti Elementary/Middle School, Pueblo of Cochiti on rodent mitigation, site assessment and technical assistance to Haak'u Learning Center, Pueblo of Acoma on prairie dog mitigation, and electronic consultation to 17 New Mexico school districts who operate schools in Indian Country on both the New Mexico Administrative Code "Standards for Excellence in Pest Control" which they must abide and the federal FIFRA certification requirement for use of restricted use pesticides in Indian Country.

### Results

Region 6 conducted 11 outreach and training activities at eight separate venues. A total of **450** district administrators, school nurses, facilities management, stakeholder state/tribal/federal agency staff, IPM coordinators, pest management professionals, building and construction professionals, and associated professional organization members from across the region were trained and consulted at these events:

- 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Indoor Air Quality Association Meeting, Grapevine, Texas
- Pesticide Safety and IPM in Schools Workshop, Pueblo of Acoma, New Mexico
- Southern NM Public Facility Managers Round Table, Las Cruces, New Mexico
- Ascension Parish Public Schools, School Nurse Annual Training, Gonzales, Louisiana
- Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Annual Statewide IPM Coordinator Conference, Corpus Christi, Texas
- 19<sup>th</sup> Annual South Texas Pest and Agricultural Workshop, Corpus Christi, Texas
- 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Tribal Environmental Summit, Dallas, Texas
- Region 6 State/Tribal Pre-SFIREG Annual Meeting, Dallas, Texas

# Healthy Schools

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## Food Recovery Challenge

Food sustainability seeks to reduce wasted food and associated environmental impacts for everyone, especially children. In 2012, the U.S. Department of Agriculture National School Lunch Program provided nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches to more than 31 million children each school day. Reducing wasted food nationwide, in homes and schools, can help feed the nation's children. EPA is helping change the way society protects the environment and conserves resources for future generations. The amount of food Americans throw away each year is staggering; more than 31 percent of food goes to waste. In 2013 alone, more than 37 million tons of food waste was generated, with only five percent diverted from landfills and incinerators for composting. EPA estimates that more food reaches landfills and incinerators than any other single material in our everyday trash, constituting 21 percent of discarded municipal solid waste. Additionally, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) reports that Americans wasted over one third of the vegetables and fruit bought in 2010.

Preventing food waste saves resources, reduces greenhouse gas emissions from landfills, as well as during food production, and it keeps nutrients in the soil. It also saves money. As part of EPA's **Food Recovery Challenge (FRC)**, organizations pledge to improve their sustainable food management practices and report their results. Organizations are encouraged to follow the [Food Recovery Hierarchy](#) to prioritize their actions to prevent and divert wasted food.

In Region 6, staff are providing technical assistance, working with the City of Dallas to potentially use schools as a pilot for the program. The Dallas Independent School District and the Early College High School Cafeteria at Mountain View College have joined the FRC, along with Hutton High School who is planning to perform a food recovery audit in the fall. Audits have also been performed at four elementary schools in Arkansas.

Learn more about the sustainable management of food and EPA's Food Recovery Program at <http://www2.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food>



# Healthy Homes

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In recent years, EPA's Office of Children's Health Protection has funded training courses conducted by the National Center for Healthy Housing. Using the **train-the-trainer** model, courses are targeted to train those who are responsible for the health and safety of families—especially children. In FY15, Region 6 was able to train more than **100 people** from a broad spectrum of housing professionals, community health workers, and others in several cities.

## Description of the Course

The two-day *Essentials for Healthy Home Practitioners* course is designed to provide attendees with an understanding of the connection between health and housing and how to take a holistic approach to identify and resolve problems that threaten the health and well-being of residents. The training addresses hazard-specific issues such as lead-based paint, radon, mold, pests, and asbestos. It identifies causes of health problems such as asthma, lead poisoning, and cancer risks in the home environment and links them to seven principles of healthy housing.



## Results

The Office of Children's Health Protection supported two *Healthy Homes* training courses this summer featuring partnerships between the Region 6 Children's Health and Environmental Justice programs, Houston Department of Health and Human Services, Texas Public Health Training Center, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, the City of Brownsville' Public Health Department, and Hidalgo County Health and Human Services Department. Classes were held August 10-11 in Brownsville, and August 13-14 in Hidalgo County. During the four days, **46** people received certification from the National Center for Healthy Housing including code inspectors, registered sanitarians, pest control applicators and technicians, community health workers, social workers. Continuing education units were offered for most of these professions.

In November 2014, EPA partnered with the Health and Wellness Alliance for Children to train city code inspectors from Dallas. The goal was to provide inspectors with the tools they need to provide a healthy living environments for residents of rental properties in Dallas. OCHP is providing funding for the training that supports the partnership with City of Dallas and the Health and Wellness Alliance for Children. There were **55** participants who attended the training.

**More than 1,100 people have taken *Healthy Homes* certification courses in Region 6 in the past four years!**

# Healthy Child Care

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The Office of Children's Health Protection provided funding for a small grant to provide training to improve children's health in child care facilities. The Children's Environmental Health Network (CEHN) was awarded a small grant to **Train-the-Trainers in Eco Healthy Child Care** practices in Dallas and Austin.

## Background

Children spend up to 40 hours a week in child care centers. Across the nation there has been an overall failure to protect young children from environmental health hazards in licensed and unlicensed child care and preschools. As many as twenty-two percent of children who are in childcare spend the day a home-based child care, while more than forty-nine percent attend in a child care facility.

Nearly seventeen percent of the population are those who identify as Latino or Hispanic. A higher percentage of Hispanic children (youth under five) are cared for by parents compared to other racial and ethnic groups. U.S. Census data from 2010 states that thirty-five percent of children living in poverty are Hispanic. These children are more likely than their peers to encounter environmental health hazards in their home and child care settings.<sup>1</sup>

## Results

The CEHN is working to address children's exposures to these environmental health hazards by hosting Train-the-Trainer (TtT) sessions to educate and support those responsible for training and providing technical assistance (child care health/nurse consultants, licensing staff, CCR&R administrators and trainers) to child care providers. Two TtT trainings were held in FY15; the first was in Austin (February), and the second was in Dallas (May), **reaching a total of 42 child care professionals.**

In addition, the funding under this grant provided for the much-needed cost of translating sixteen fact sheets into Spanish.

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<sup>1</sup> Statements are from the Children's Environmental Health Network's 2014 grant proposal.

## Healthy Child Care

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Arkansas Department of Health

Region 6 focused on a second initiative to train child care providers with a small grant to the Arkansas Department of Health (ADH). The ADH has been a partner with EPA on lead based paint

Under the grant, ADH hosted a *Lunch and Learn* series to train childcare providers, Head Start Directors and school nurses in Central Arkansas and surrounding counties (Pulaski, Jefferson, Saline, Lonoke, Faulkner, Grant, and Garland Counties). Each session featured a presentation on indoor environmental issues, such as asthma triggers and lead-based paint. The goals of the project were to: 1) increase awareness of the relationship between health and the school environment, 2) develop children's environmental health and asthma partnerships, and 3) gain a better understanding of the need for such educational initiatives in childcare centers across the state.

### Results

At the conclusion of the six-month initiative, 29 participants had registered and **25 of those were fully trained**. In addition, ADH collaborated with the Clinton Foundation to present a community event entitled, *Bridge to the Future*. An environmental village was setup that featured information on healthy homes, asthma triggers, lead-based paint and indoor air quality. More than **500 school age children participated** in the event.

On Saturday, August 29, 2015 the Arkansas Department of Health in collaboration with Pulaski Technical College and the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences hosted an 8-hour *Healthy Homes Practitioner Course* for licensed childcare workers. Two hundred and fifty-six (256) continuing education hours were awarded at the conclusion of the training and a total of **32 people completed the training**.

Arkansas Department of Health Services is an EPA grantee to implement a state program pursuant to TSCA 402. The overall goals of the workplan include, maintaining the appropriate infrastructure to successfully administer and enforce the lead-based paint program, provide training for lead inspectors, conduct inspections of licensed contractors engaged in lead-based paint activities, and taking appropriate enforcement when needed. The overall goal is to prevent children being exposed to lead-based paint in pre-1978 homes, daycares, schools, or otherwise defined child-occupied facility.



# The Health and Wellness Alliance for Children

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The Region 6 Children's Health Coordinator has been active for past three years on the county-wide steering committee for the Health and Wellness Alliance for Children (HWAC), a non-profit arm of Children's Health hospital in Dallas, and has co-chaired the Asthma Healthy Physical Environments working group for a year and a half.



In addition to providing technical assistance to HWAC, the Children's Health Program sponsored a technical assistance workshop at City Hall last September. **There were more than 40 participants** including the Director of the City of Dallas 311 program, city attorneys, code inspectors, and social workers, respiratory therapists, and registered nurses from Children's Medical Center. City and Hospital staff spent the day mapping their respective responsibilities and engaging with each other on where they could connect to provide safer, healthier environments for kids.

## Gina McCarthy Visits Children's Health

In April, EPA Administrator, Gina McCarthy and Region 6 Administrator, Ron Curry visited Children's Health to see in person, the work they are doing to address pediatric asthma in Dallas County. They toured the emergency department where some of Dallas' 60,000 kids with asthma are treated, and met with HWAC staff to learn more about the work they are doing to address children's health.



# The Health and Wellness Alliance for Children

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## Results

The technical training with the City of Dallas kicked off a **three-part series**, which was followed by two other training events in FY15 for Dallas code inspectors and city attorneys. Those two events resulted in an additional **105 city employees trained** to protect children from the environmental risks of household exposures such as lead based paint, asthma triggers such as mold and pests, and second hand smoke.

The training highlights just one aspect of the partnership between EPA, the HWAC, and the City of Dallas. The groundwork laid over the past few years has resulted in sustainable results with city code inspectors and attorneys gaining new knowledge about asthma triggers—it has helped make the **link between children's health and housing**.

The HWAC is continuing with additional initiatives such as **advocating to update the Dallas housing code** to reflect best practices based on the National Center for Healthy Housing.

The HWAC has also launched ***My Asthma Pal***, a new app that can be downloaded to help improve access to basic asthma education. It also helps users manage their asthma wherever they are. The new app was launched in September. Some of the features include asthma tips from top medical resources and allow users to:

- Track asthma medication use and set reminders
- Share your Asthma Action Plan and Asthma Control Test (ACT) scores with your
- Manage your asthma symptoms over time and track improvement

For more information on the asthma app, visit [www.myasthmapal.com](http://www.myasthmapal.com)

For more information on the Health and Wellness Alliance for Children and their ongoing work on asthma and other chronic childhood illness, visit their website at <http://www.healthandwellnessalliance.com/>

## Internal Coordination

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The Children's Health program at EPA is driven by Executive Order 13045 - *Protection of Children from Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks*. The Office of Children's Health Protection, which is located within the Office of the Administrator, has the fundamental goal to ensure that all EPA actions and programs address the unique vulnerabilities of children. Children may be more vulnerable to environmental exposures than adults because their bodily systems are still developing; they eat more, drink more, and breathe more in proportion to their body size; and their behavior can expose them more to chemicals and organisms. Read the Executive Order at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-1997-04-23/pdf/97-10695.pdf>

It is therefore essential to ensure that CEH is incorporated in Regional actions. This year, EPA released the first ***Strategy for Protecting Children's Environmental Health FY 2015-2018***. In addition to the new task of **tracking children's health measures across the Region**, the Children's Health Coordinator continues to work with other program leads from across the Region. Highlights of efforts include:

- Coordinate with Regional Science Council and invite a featured speaker to present on children's health topics during Children's Health Month.
- Coordinate with External Affairs on press releases, social media posts and internal articles for staff highlighting CEH initiatives.
- Coordinate with Tribal Affairs and Environmental Justice to provide talking points on Tribal calls, and provide program details to stakeholder on the CEH program.
- Attend periodic meetings and make recommendations to the Enforcement team who is working on potential Supplemental Environmental Projects (in lieu of penalties for violations) that may benefit children's health.
- Coordinate with Superfund and Emergency Response lead for Local Emergency Planning Committee bulletins for children's health month.
- Attend periodic meetings with the Lead and Indoor Environments Coordinators to coordinate on funding options, outreach, and other program priorities.

### Indoor Air Quality

In Region 6, the Indoor Air Coordinator manages grants that address the asthma epidemic and coordinates outreach events focused on managing environmental asthma triggers. In FY14-15 grants totaling about \$60,000 were made to the following organizations:

- The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio to establish summer camps to education children diagnosed with asthma about managing their environments to avoid asthma triggers.
- Arkansas Department of Health to educate child care providers on indoor environmental issues such as asthma triggers and lead based paint and to conduct a community health fair. (Details on page 9)

## Internal Coordination

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- Children's Environmental Health Network to fund a Train-the-Trainers program educating supervisors with the Eco-Healthy Child Care program. (Details on page 8)

### Lead Based Paint

EPA's lead based paint program works to prevent childhood exposure to lead, which can affect almost every organ and system in the human body. Children are especially at risk for exposure and even low levels can cause behavior and learning problems, lower IQ and hyperactivity, slowed growth, hearing problems, and anemia. In rare cases, ingestion of lead can cause seizures, coma and even death. Pregnant women are also at risk. Lead can cross the placental barrier exposing the fetus. This can result in serious effects to the mother and developing fetus, including reduced growth of the fetus and premature birth.

EPA makes grants available to states to implement an enforcement program pursuant to Section 402 of the Toxic Substances Control Act. Under the grants program, states administer a program to train lead inspectors, conduct inspections of licensed contractors, and take appropriate enforcement actions. They may also manage a lead certification and accreditation program under the Repair, Renovate, and Painting Rule. Region 6 currently has four grants totaling over \$1,000,000 to Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and the Cherokee Nation.

### Lead Program Circuit Rider

Making a connection on children's health protection in smaller communities can be challenging. To address this challenge, Region 6 hired a Senior Environmental Employee (SEE) to travel around the Region and meet one-on-one with county health and environmental officials, and to visit with professionals at hospitals, libraries, schools, and with the general public at local health fairs. This *Circuit Rider* Initiative is unique in its approach to reaching out to rural communities about protecting children from environmental health risks. From these efforts, EPA is making an impact where we might not otherwise have had any connection.

This year, the *Circuit Rider* traveled to more than 110 communities. Within those communities, the SEE visited 82 city/county health or environmental offices, 49 schools and libraries, 6 clinics, hospitals or health care professionals, and provided information at 6 health fairs or community events. The results of these one-on-one visits and appearances at community events have raised awareness about children's environmental health to thousands of people in rural communities in four states.

# Environmental Education

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The Children's Health Program works closely with the Environmental Education Program to get the message out to students about how the environment impacts kid's health.

## Student Curriculum

EPA's Office of Children's Health Protection recently released a student curriculum geared toward ages 9-13. It can be used not only in the class room, but in extracurricular and after-school groups. The curriculum teaches students the definition of environmental health, how to protect themselves and how to become champions for children's health protection. Lesson plans are organized around cards that provide actions for teaching: *Ask*, *Do* and *Explain* with hands-on activities and visual cards.



## President's Environmental Youth Award: Fighting Arsenic

In July, EPA announced that eight middle school children from Whiteface, Texas won the President's Environmental Youth Award (PEYA) for their work to fight arsenic, a naturally occurring metal and a known carcinogen that can affect children's intellectual function, among other potential health impacts. The six and seventh graders won the award for their three year-long campaign to eliminate their catchphrase, *Arsenic--It's What's for Dinner*. Groundwater contaminated by arsenic is the main source of drinking water in their community, Cochran County, Texas. The students led a community research project to decrease contamination and human exposure to arsenic by conducting field research, interviews and tested drinking water, wetlands, native plants, and soil in their community. They discovered that sand drop seed grass is an effective tool in removing arsenic from the soil and that water drawn from the hot side of the tap had lower levels of arsenic than water from the cold side. The project led to a reduction in both county and state arsenic levels. Learn more about the PEYA awards at: [www.epa.gov/peya](http://www.epa.gov/peya).

EPA's partnership with the Perot Museum of Nature and Science resulted in several events in FY15, which are described on page 6 highlighting activities during Children's Health Month. Last year, EPA hosted a SunWise workshop for teachers, and followed up this year by staffing a booth, during their Teacher's open house. EPA provided information on SunWise, Clean, Green, and Healthy Schools, and other environmental education programs. In addition to speaking to several dozen teachers, Regional Environmental Education Coordinator, Bonita King stated that the following week EPA received **53 follow up calls** for additional information, "That one night has resulted in a multitude of outreach to educators who are interested in utilizing environmental and nature learning in their classrooms."



## Webcasts, Social Media, etc.

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### Face Book and Twitter

This year children's health messages were the focus of numerous Face Book and Twitter postings. Messages were posted once a month to correspond with children's health events and during special emphasis months such as Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month, Children's Health Month, Lead Poisoning Prevention Week, Engineer's Week, Children's Health Symposium among others. The Children's Health Coordinator was also featured on Region 6's Face Book page during Women in Science/Women's History Month.

### Providing Technical Expertise

Researchers at the Center for Health Policy at Brookings, interviewed the Region 6 Children's Health Coordinator to gain a better understanding of EPA's role with asthma education and to learn about the resources that are going into community based programs. The paper, A Case Study in Payment Reform to Support Optimal Pediatric Asthma Care was published in the spring of 2015 and can be read online.

<http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2015/04/27-case-study-pediatric-asthma-farmer>

### Healthy Homes Blog

The Office of Environmental Justice and Tribal Affairs requested that the Children's Health Coordinator write a Blog on the successful *Healthy Homes* training that was hosted by the Southern Area Health Education Center at New Mexico State University. The blog was published on EPA's website and re-posted by several online publications including UC Davis Center for Regional Change, Indian Country Today, and The Center for Health, Environment, and Justice.



In collaboration with NASA, Region 6 scientist, Dr. Sala Senkayi and the Director of the Office of Children's Health Protection, Dr. Ruth Etzel participated on a panel discussion on climate change impacts on children's health. They presented during a live broadcast hosted by NASA at the Goddard Space Center in Maryland. The panel broadcast was part of EPA's Earth Day events in April of 2015.