

# U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 6

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



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

**October 1, 2018 - September 30, 2019**



## Contents

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I. Region 6 Children’s Environmental Health Program Summary Highlights	3
II. Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit: A Unique Partner	4
PEHSU and the Children’s Health Symposia: Ongoing Success Story	
PEHSU and CEH Planned Activities for 2020	
III. Children’s Health Focus on Tribes	7
IV. Children’s Health Border Grant Results	8
V. Focus on Lead Poisoning Prevention	10
VI. Advising and Coordinating on CEH Programs	12
VII. Children’s Health Month	13

## Summary of Highlights for FY19

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- Leveraged funding from multiple programs in FY19/20 to support more than 120K in children's health initiatives in four states
- More than 190 people attended Children's Environmental Health Symposia in Catoosa, Oklahoma and New Orleans Louisiana.
- 8 people attended the Healthy Homes certification training in New Orleans, bringing the Region 6 cumulative total to 1,255 people trained since 2011.
- 95 *IAQ Tools for Schools* kits and 3,000 education brochures on topics such as asthma triggers, lead, and general tips to protect children's health were distributed to state agencies and non-profits in FY19.
- Leveraging lead and CEH funds, Region 6 provided a total of 26 Tribal Scholarships to individuals representing multiple tribes to attend training in Oklahoma and Louisiana.
- Regions 6 awarded \$140,000 to three entities (from a joint RFP with Region 9) resulting in 570 promotoras, parents, Head Start personnel, and pregnant women trained in children's environmental health protection. Grantees were successful in developing and distributing new materials, as well as establishing new partnerships. (See pages 8-9)
- The Circuit Rider visited more than 135 communities in Texas and New Mexico and contacted 209 separate entities within those communities.
- The CEH Advisor presented to multiple audiences including the Regional Tribal Operations Committee, new EPA Region 6 employees, and to fourth year medical student at Texas Tech University Health Science Center, reaching 50 people.
- The PEHSU trained 217 promotoras and school nurses in Ruidoso, New Mexico.
- The CEH Advisor wrote an article featuring children's health messages for the Louisiana Department of Health state newsletter, reaching several thousand people.
- Region 6 awarded 25K to the University of Texas at El Paso to train promotoras in lead poisoning prevention.

## Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit: A Unique Partner

The Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit (PEHSU) is a resource for pediatricians, public health officials, school personnel, and parents to get information about children's health and the environment. There are ten PEHSUs in the US, one for each EPA Region. In Region 6, the PEHSU is the **Southwest Center for Pediatric Environmental Health**, located on the campus of Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center in El Paso, Texas. EPA and ATSDR jointly fund the PEHSU program.

Since 1998, this network of experts has been working together to address the clinical and public health practice of children's environmental health, devoted to the rigor of evidence-based care in academic institutions. The PEHSUs provide clinical care to children with toxic exposures and disease of environmental origin, which is much needed because **twenty-five percent of US children live within one mile of a hazardous waste site**. They also serve as points of referral for practicing pediatricians and other health care providers. Their mission is to:

- Educate the public about environmental exposures and health outcomes
- Reduce environmental health threats to children;
- Improve access to expertise in pediatric environmental medicine; and
- Strengthen public health prevention capacity.

They are a key partner for the Children's Health Program and Region 6 relies heavily on the PEHSU to provide logistical support for conferences as well as CEH expertise, links to the PEHSU national network of pediatricians, and the development of *promotoras* (community health worker) workshops, Healthy Homes events, and other training opportunities throughout the year. This year, the EPA Administrator emphasized a strong push to eliminate lead poisoning. The PEHSU assisted in working toward that goal as detailed in the following report.

*Map shows the location of each PESHU within each EPA Region.*



## PEHSU and the Children's Health Symposia: Ongoing Success Story

Largely managed by the PEHSU, over the past few years the CEH program has focused efforts on training health care providers, school nurses, and public health practitioners by hosting numerous Children's Environmental Health Symposia. The first symposium was held in Little Rock, Arkansas in 2009. In 2015-16, two symposia were held in El Paso, (one of which focused exclusively on school nurses) and then in Brownsville, Texas a few months later. In 2018, two more symposia were held in Dallas, Texas and Tuscaloosa, Oklahoma, and in 2019, a symposium was held in New Orleans, LA. In sum, **EPA has funded a total of seven symposia training more than 700 people.**

This year alone, **EPA funded programs that trained 90 public health practitioners at the New Orleans CEH symposium and 8 people the following day at a Healthy Homes training.** Professional continuing education credits were provided to participants.

### Results

Not only did people attend the training, most also received continuing education credits and are expected to reach at least 100 additional people with the information obtained from the training.

New partnerships frequently result from contacts made at the Symposia. As a result of the symposium in New Orleans, **the CEH Coordinator provided IAQ Tools for Schools kits to 90 constituents, distributed 300 brochures, and provided four boxes of EPA children's health publications for Children's Health Month events. The coordinator also wrote an article featuring CEH messages for the state department of health newsletter.**

In previous years, the symposia facilitated the development of a new relationship with Child Care Group, an organization that operates six child care centers with a focus on early education, a parent support program, and provider training. EPA provided more than 1,000 children's tip sheets in English and Spanish, materials on lead poisoning prevention, and sun safety. The Dallas Housing Authority also invited EPA staff to participate in the National Night Out event on their Lake West campus combining a safety event with children's health. The Poison Control Center requested 1,000 copies of the *Play It Safe* lead poisoning prevention brochure.



## PEHSU and Children's Health Planned Initiatives for 2020

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Some symposia have received media coverage increasing the dissemination of CEH messages to an audience of several thousand people within a local broadcast area. Finally, from evaluation results, **ninety-three percent of participants** from the School Nurses Symposium indicated they **would make changes in their classroom** school setting based on the knowledge they obtained from the symposium.

### Funding for FY20

Through the OCHP cooperative agreement, Region 6 funded the Southwest Center for Pediatric Environmental Health for **96K** for the following projects:

#### **Children's Environmental Health Training for school and child care personnel (43K)**

The Children's Health program has funded the PEHSU to plan, manage, and facilitate a symposium for teachers, school nurses, and child care providers either in Arkansas, or along the US/Mexico Border to focus on protecting children from environmental exposures where they live, learn and play. The symposium will provide content available for continuing education credit to participants and will focus on lead poisoning prevention, among other topics. Initiatives will focus on testing for lead in drinking water, and on educating teachers and school personnel on mitigation options and the hazards of childhood exposures to lead based paint in a comprehensive lead outreach campaign and training.

#### **RRP Training Focusing on Protecting Children under 5 years old (25K)**

The lead-based paint program added funding to facilitate RRP Initial Renovator classes in parts of the region that training providers are not readily available. The training is targeted to protect children under 5 years old in pre-1978 homes or child care facilities that are being renovated. The training would be fully funded by the PEHSU and would not cost the attendees anything. Training would cover least three trainings for ten people in each class in Lubbock, TX; Jonesboro, AR; Alexandria, LA; Amarillo, TX (alternate) and Shreveport, LA (alternate).

#### **Disaster Recovery in Louisiana (28K)**

In 2016, the State of Louisiana experienced historic flooding that caused damages to buildings, homes and schools. In Ouachita Parish, the Cities of Monroe and West Monroe are planning for long term recovery and resiliency from the March 2016 flood event. EPA is already working with the Parish on sustainability efforts; this training could enhance our sustainability efforts and serve as a model for green and healthier outcomes in recovery and resiliency from flood impacts. The PEHSU will perform a Green and Healthy/schools Training in targeted communities within Louisiana. The goal is to foster safer health outcomes from flood impacts and serve as a model for flood impacted communities across the nation. The audience for the training would be residents, child care centers, schools, medical and health professionals and builders.



## Children's Health Symposia: Focus on Tribes

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In 2018-19 EPA partnered with the Cherokee Tribal Nation to co-host the Children's Environmental Health Tribal Symposium in Catoosa, Oklahoma on October 17-18, 2018. **More than 100 people attended the symposium** that featured Tribal speakers who focused on issues unique to Tribes within Region 6. Chuck Hoskin Jr., Secretary of State of the Cherokee Nation, and Arturo Blanco, of EPA Region 6 provided opening remarks.

### Results

This fiscal year, EPA was also able to provide **26 scholarships** for Tribal representatives to attend the CEH Symposium; 24 for the training in Oklahoma and 2 more for the event in New Orleans, Louisiana in June.

The CEH Advisor also provided outreach materials on asthma triggers to the Kickapoo Traditional Tribe in Eagle Pass for their back-to-school event in August.

This past year, a collaboration developed with Cherokee Tribal Nation resulting in a children's health presentation at the Regional Tribal Operations Committee meeting.



Staff from EPA's national lead program presented at the training in Catoosa and followed up to offer a pilot lead poisoning prevention training for tribes in New Mexico in the fall of 2019 (See page 10 for details).

### Testing for lead in drinking water in schools

The Region 6 Drinking Water program offered testing for lead in drinking water to all Tribal schools and child care facilities within the Region. Although the CEH was not involved in any of the preliminary discussions, nor in the development of educational materials, she was listed as a resource and copied on letters that provided results to tribes.

### FY2020

Planning is underway to host a second Tribal CEH Symposium in New Mexico in 2020. Discussions have already begun with Regions 8 and 9 to develop a tri-Regional event.

## Children's Environmental Health OCHP/Border Grants 2017-19

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In 2018, OCHP provided **\$70,000 in additional funding** for Regions 6 and 9 to be used specifically to support “prenatal environmental health education, healthy childcare education, environmental health youth summits, and/or pediatric environmental health risks” along the US/MX border. The Regions added additional program resources, greatly leveraging OCHP money. Ultimately, **\$224,500 was awarded** to a total of five CEH grantees, three being in Region 6. The results for Region 6 grantees are summarized below.

### Results

#### Texas Tech University Health Science Center at El Paso (45K)

Texas Tech created **four online modules** to educate community health workers, medical students, and other health professionals as needed. Topics include indoor air quality, pesticides (and IPM), household hazardous chemicals and finally, lead poisoning (which will be completed in 2019). Texas Tech will work with the Office of Continuing Medical Education to make the modules available so participants can earn continuing education credits.

**Two short children's books**, *Pest X* and *The Mysterious Case of Lead*, were printed in English and Spanish; the books are distributed during educational and community outreach events, and by request. In addition, a **work book** was developed for Promotoras that can be downloaded for free. The University also held a conference on October 12, 2018 in which **160 promotoras were trained** in CEH issues. An additional workshop will be held in Brownsville at University of Texas, Rio Grande Valley before the end of the year.

A **Memorandum of Understanding** was formally executed between TTUHSC EP and UTRGV which established a joint effort to provide education to both medical students and the community along the US/MX border. Additional agreements have been established with the Red de Promotoras and the New Mexico Department of Health to offer continued education to community health workers on emerging environmental health risks.

Finally, the PEHSU trained **120 promotoras** at the *Promotora de Red* Conference, and **97 school nurses** in Riodoso, New Mexico.

#### Texas A&M University Health Science Center (45K)

Texas A&M received funding to revise their curricula related to integrated pest management (IPM), indoor air quality (IAQ), and lead poisoning prevention, tailoring it to meet Texas Department of State Health Services community health worker accreditation program.

The grant further provided funding to train parents, caretakers, and staff from Head Start Centers and pregnant women and women of reproductive age in reducing environmental exposures to children's health risks. Texas A&M educated **258 parents, 70 pregnant women/women of reproductive ages and 82 Head Start personnel** with all 4 curriculums. An additional 3,781 people were contacted during community health fairs





## Children's Environmental Health OCHP/Border Grants 2017-19

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### The New Mexico Department of Health (50K)

Working to reduce childhood exposure to asthma triggers and lead based paint, the New Mexico Asthma Control Program (ACP) partnered with Nuestra Salud and the New Mexico Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program (CLPPP) to conduct a series of meetings targeted for the local community. As a result of the meetings, an additional partnership with Jardin de los Niños evolved to create a community resource library which established a convenient and permanent place for the community to access information about reducing exposures and improving indoor air quality. Results of the work accomplished under this grant include:

- 59 new members joined the Lung Health Network
- 5 Lung Health Network meetings were held
- 2 trainings were conducted
- 1 new community resource library was established
- 3 local organizations were involved



## Focus on Lead Poisoning Prevention

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### Lead Based Paint Program Summary

The Regional Lead-Based Paint program annually awards and oversees funding to states and/or Tribes to implement lead paint programs and provides accreditation to lead paint training providers. It works with building code and permitting officials regarding Renovation, Painting and Repair (RRP) Rule requirements and encourages them to inform homeowners and contractors during the permit process. It also reaches out to the regulated community to get RRP certified, informs homeowners to hire RRP-certified contractors, when renovating or painting pre-1978 housing and integrates assistance into inspections and enforcement to improve awareness and compliance with the rule.

### National War on Lead Initiative

In 2018, EPA announced a reinvigorated *War on Lead*; EPA is the lead agency on the President's Task Force on Health and Safety Risks to Children. In December, the Task Force published *the Federal Action Plan to Reduce Childhood Lead Exposures and Associated Health Impacts*. The Plan will address the following goals:

- Reduce children's exposure to lead sources
- Identify lead-exposed children and Improve their health outcomes
- Communicate more effectively with stakeholders
- Support and conduct critical research to inform efforts to reduce lead exposures and related health risks

In Region 6, the Lead Coordinator and Children's Health Advisor attended a national two-day lead mapping coordination meeting that resulted in additional coordination with ORD on identifying areas of Texas with higher blood lead levels. Work on this project is ongoing.

### CEH Tribal Lead Poisoning Prevention Training

In FY19, the National Tribal Toxics Council and the National EPA-Tribal Science Council, in collaboration with EPA's Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention and Office of Research and Development formed a subcommittee on lead which developed the draft ***Lead Awareness in Indian Country: Keeping our Children Healthy!*** curriculum for tribal communities. The curriculum was designed for tribes, by tribes to: 1) Raise awareness about childhood lead exposures, 2) Understand lead's potential impacts on children's health and cultural practices, and 3) Encourage actions that can be taken to reduce and/or prevent childhood lead exposures.

The audience for the curriculum is tribal leaders, healthcare providers, parents, grandparents, teachers, daycare workers, healthcare providers, and youth (ages 12 and up). It is designed to be taught by community leaders (i.e. with experience educating and training members of their tribal community but does not require the instructors be experts on lead exposure. **Region 6 hosted a pilot curriculum event September 17-18, 2019 at Isleta in New Mexico. The Lead Based Paint and Children's Environmental Health Coordinators attended the event in which more than 50 representatives from about 20 tribes participated.**

## Focus on Lead Poisoning Prevention

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### Small Grant to University of Texas at El Paso

Region 6 plans to award a small **25K grant** to the University of Texas at El Paso to train promotoras for a specific region of El Paso known to have elevated blood lead levels. The unsolicited proposal was received in the fall of 2018 and funded with additional money from OCHP that is intended to specifically target lead poisoning prevention. The award is currently in the last stages of funding and should be made final in late August. The grant will be managed in the El Paso Border office.

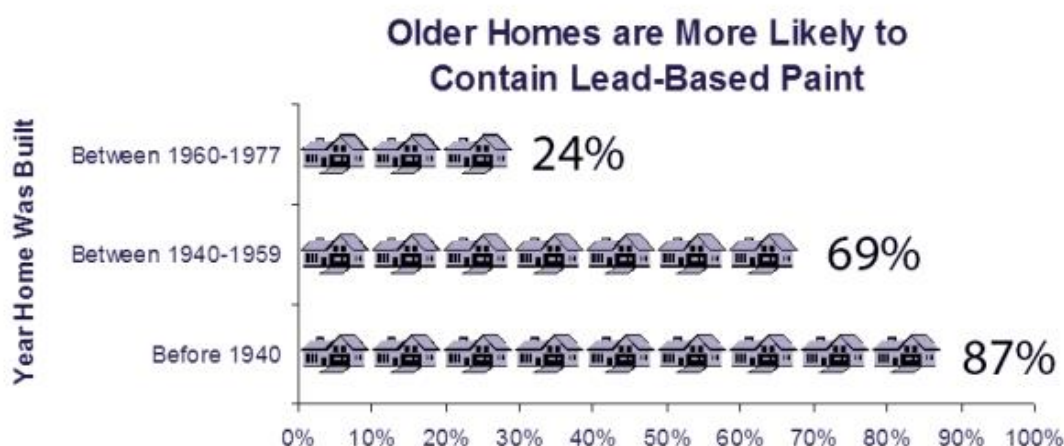
### Circuit Rider

For the past six years, the Lead Based Paint Program has supported a Senior Environmental Employee (SEE) to visit rural areas of Region 6. This SEE *Circuit Rider* travels to dozens of communities each year visiting with Planning and Zoning, Code Enforcement and Permitting Departments, public libraries, county courthouses, US Post Offices, and WIC/Head Start locations.

This year (November 1, 2018-June 30, 2019), the **circuit rider visited more than 135 communities** in Texas and New Mexico and contacted 209 separate entities within those communities. In addition, the circuit rider attended four community events including three health fairs and one homebuyer's expo.

### Healthy Homes Training

In FY18 the Lead Based Paint Program provided \$30,000 for the PEHSU to conduct several Healthy Homes training events targeted to the professional community. To date, training has been conducted in New Orleans and will continue into FY20.



## Advising and Coordinating on Children's Health Programs

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One of the Children's Health Advisor's roles is to ensure children's environmental health messages are incorporated in programs across the Region and to coordinate with programs where there is a nexus with CEH. Environmental Education, US/Mexico Border, Environmental Justice, Tribal, Drinking Water, and other programs frequently touch upon CEH issues.

### Working with the Office of Children's Health Protection

The Advisor continues to attend monthly CEH national calls, coordinates with other senior agency CEH leaders, and advises newer Regional Coordinators. In 2019, she consulted with Region 6 staff and HQ management on national meetings and offered Region 6 facilities for the annual meeting, she gave a presentation to new Region 6 employees on the importance of CEH in all program areas and made a formal presentation to a medical student enrolled at Texas Tech Health Science Center in El Paso.

OCHP has experienced an unusually high turn-over in the past two years and the Region 6 Advisor is one of three senior CEH regional staff in the nation providing some continuity and source of institutional knowledge for newer CEH staff in other regions.

### Air Quality, Pesticides, Border, and Environmental Justice



The CEH Advisor continues to support the AQI Flag Program and provided information on the program to state health and environmental agencies during the spring AQI challenge. She also coordinated with OCHP to have the Flag Program promoted to new CEH Coordinators on a national call during the spring AQI challenge and gave a brief overview of the program to the City of Houston.

The CEH Advisor attended the Lead dust rule briefing and coordinated an outreach event with External Affairs in Houston. The Advisor attended an air monitoring from airports briefing and coordinated with ATSDR and Regional Enforcement staff to learn about human exposures to chemicals in the north Texas area (Granbury) and potential impacts to children. CEH Coordinator provided boiler plate language on children's environmental exposures for the purpose of communicating with external stakeholders.

The Advisor further coordinated with Region 5 and HQ on a thallium exposure (adult) in New Mexico and with stakeholders in San Antonio on a pesticide issue. The coordinator served as Acting Chief of the Toxics Section for three weeks in the spring.

The Advisor also met several times with the US/Mexico Border program to share information about on-going CEH Border work and to ensure CEH was included as a fundamental strategy in addressing Border 2020 goals.

# Children's Health Month

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## Results from FY19

### Outreach Materials Distributed and Technical Support

EPA participated in the Dallas Housing Authority's National Night Out/Children's Health Awareness event at the Hamptons at Lake West campus in west Dallas and provided material to residents on October 10<sup>th</sup>. The CEH Advisor also provided sun safety materials for first graders at Mary Moore Elementary in Arlington. During Lead Poisoning Prevention Week, EPA staff was in Nacogdoches, Texas for a Healthy Halloween event.

On October 25<sup>th</sup>, EPA staff from Brownfields, Lead-Based Paint, and CEH programs met with HHS to discuss ways to collaborate on future projects.

### Presentations

The PEHSU sponsored a training for community health workers in El Paso on October 12<sup>th</sup>, and Representatives from EPA's lead-based paint program presented at the Kerr County Employee Health Fair in Kerrville, Texas on October 18<sup>th</sup>. The Tribal CEH Symposium was held in Oklahoma October 16-18, 2018.

### Looking Forward to FY20



Region 6 CEH, Lead, Pesticides and External Affairs staff have teamed up to write, direct, and produce four mini-segments on Tips to Protect Children's Environmental Health. The segments are scheduled to be finalized in September and available for distribution on social media for Children's Health Month. Region 6 will be the first region to produce such videos and they will hopefully be used as a model for other regions.