

Salt Lake City Children's Environmental Health/Environmental Justice Geographic (CEH/EJ) Initiative

What is the CEH/EJ initiative?

The CEH/EJ is a showcase project initiated by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), in partnership with the State, which focuses on coordinating environmental programs and achieving measurable improvements in children's health.

The initiative is a two year project which will identify and reduce children's exposure to contaminants from multiple pathways--air, land, and water. The project will not create new programs, but will instead focus on collaborating with other agencies to concentrate existing programs within the community.

Which communities were selected and why?

The communities selected include Glendale, Jordan Meadows, Poplar Grove, Rose Park, State Fairpark, and Westpointe. The neighborhoods were selected based on the potential presence of disproportionate environmental burdens, social vulnerability factors, and the community's demonstrated interest and past participation in addressing environmental issues.

How will the project help the community?

The long term goal of the project is to achieve a more holistic, integrated approach to mitigating environmental impacts on children's health through the promotion of healthier environments where children live, learn, and play. When completed, the initiative will show measurable success in reducing environmental risk in the community and increased promotion of children's health. The project is being designed to be sustainable and replicable for use in other communities. Additionally, it focuses the efforts of multiple organizations currently working on disparate projects in the area.

Why focus on children in the selected community?

Children are not simply "little adults." Their developing bodily systems often make them more vulnerable than adults to harmful environmental exposures. They eat more, drink more, and breathe more in proportion to their body size than adults do. Their behavior can expose them to a greater amount chemicals and harmful organisms. The selected communities have a fairly young population with a high number of young children and young adults.

Which agencies are working on the initiative?

The EPA, Utah Department of Environmental Quality, Utah Department of Health, Salt Lake Valley Health Department, and Salt Lake City Corporation form the project Steering Committee and will help coordinate with local community and non-profit organizations. Additional Federal, State and local agencies will be invited to participate in this initiative as needed.

When will the project start? What will be involved?

The planning stages of the project have begun. The community organizations within the area of focus will be engaged early on in the process and will be full partners with regard to the identification of issues of concern to be addressed under the Initiative. The community involvement work will begin in early 2010

Examples of what this project can achieve.

Some examples of what can be achieved are: reductions in lead and mercury poisoning; improvement of air quality and environmental management of asthma; increased pollution prevention; and home testing of radon. There is a long list of potential projects that will be presented to the community in early 2010.

How can residents and other organizations participate?

Community organizations and residents in the area will be engaged early on and considered full partners with regard to identifying issues to be addressed by the project. A community listening session will be held in early 2010 to meet with residents and hear which programs are of interest to the community. Once the session has been held, working committees will be set up. These committees will ideally be made up of, and be led by, residents in the community. Those interested in participating can contact Alicia Aalto to be added to a community contact list.

Who can I contact for more information?

Jean Belille, Environmental Protection Specialist
Environmental Protection Agency, Region 8
Denver, Colorado, 80202-1129

303 312-6556 or belille.jean@epa.gov