

CALIFORNIA TRACKING

The Newsletter of the California Environmental Health Tracking Program

No. 9 - spring - 2005

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CALIFORNIA
ENVIRONMENTAL
HEALTH TRACKING
PROGRAM

IN THIS ISSUE

One of the main goals of CEHTP is to provide better and more complete information about the health of Californians and the environment. In addition, CEHTP is committed to facilitating the effective application and integration of this information in public health activities.

This commitment includes assessing and increasing stakeholder capacity to translate information into actions and policies by connecting stakeholders to relevant tools and resources, as well as directly providing resources, training, and technical assistance.

In this issue, we offer some thoughts, news, and resources related to facilitating the use of information to build community capacity and enhance public health functions.

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Data to Action :: Bridging the Gap between Information and Practice

It takes a considerable and concerted effort on the part of a diverse group of stakeholders (including community leaders and advocates, state and local health and environmental agencies, health care providers, policy makers, non-governmental organizations, etc.) to work toward the goal of healthy people in healthy communities.

The potential of an environmental health tracking system in the pursuit of that goal is immense; however, achieving this potential will ultimately depend on the ability of stakeholders to use tracking information to carry out public health functions and services.

In addition to improving the quality and availability of environmental health information, CEHTP is working to facilitate the effective use of information among stakeholders for various reasons including:

1) Information is only as good as people's ability to utilize it. Information can be powerful; however, people need the skills, resources, relationships, and tools to integrate data, take action, and create change.

2) It cannot be expected or assumed that availability and dissemination of information (no matter how good the information is) will automatically lead to effective policies and actions.

3) Many stakeholders (especially communities that are overburdened by diseases and environmental risk factors) have limited resources/infrastructure and experience using data. When better equipped to understand and use environmental health information, they can become stronger partners in the pursuit of public health goals by translating information into actions and policies.

4) Many public agencies collect, analyze, interpret, and disseminate data; however, they are limited in their ability to take direct public health actions. Therefore, it is important not only to ensure that information collected by these gets to the right stakeholders but also to ensure that stakeholders are better equipped to use that information.

In order to begin closing the gap between public health information and practice, CEHTP is working to strengthen stakeholder capacity, expertise, and resources to find, understand, integrate, and utilize environmental health information in carrying out public health activities (such as interventions, advocacy, research, policy development, evaluation, etc.).

This priority echoes the stakeholder feedback CEHTP has gathered as well as the recommendations of the Senate Bill 702 Expert Working Group.

CEHTP has begun to address stakeholder capacity, first by listening to and learning from stakeholders via a series of needs assessments and various forums. Based on initial findings, CEHTP provided local capacity-building mini-grants (see winter 2004 newsletter), collaborated with the University of California Center for Environmental Public Health Tracking to conduct a pilot environmental health data workshop for community leaders and advocates (also winter 2004 issue), and informed stakeholders about existing health and environmental data sources (see winter 2003 issue).

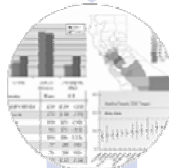
CEHTP is also developing various software applications and services that could help organizations to better analyze and utilize environmental health data. One of the CEHTP pilot projects is also working with an advisory group to determine how best to increase community capacity to apply project results and findings toward community actions and policies.

Also, while CEHTP may be limited – by scope, funding, and expertise – in providing direct resources and trainings, we strive to link stakeholders to relevant resources whenever appropriate and possible (see page 2).

Finally, CEHTP continues to seek input from stakeholders regarding these issues. We must address these issues in appropriate and strategic ways that are useful and parallel to stakeholder needs and that empowers communities. Please contact us if you would like to share any ideas and suggestions. We welcome everyone's feedback.



DATA



INFORMATION
+
RESOURCES




= ACTION!

Beyond Data :: Resources for Community Action and Public Health Practice

For this issue, CEHTP has compiled a list of resources and tools – organizations and publications – related to environmental health, data and information, organizational and community capacity, and public health practice. This compendium is not meant to be exhaustive – the list is just a snapshot of the myriad of existing resources. CEHTP is developing a searchable, online version of resources that will be more systematic and comprehensive. The resources below are fairly general rather than specific to an issue such as asthma advocacy (see [Community Action to Fight Asthma](#)) or location such as Oakland (see [InfoOakland](#)).

CEHTP encourages readers to let us know which resources in this issue are particularly useful and why. We also encourage readers to share other resources and success stories/models (especially related to effective application of information for action). This will help us to better shape and prioritize future capacity building endeavors. Please send us your feedback through our [online feedback form](#) or [email us](#).

[KEY:]

-  = Adobe Acrobat Document
- META** = Link to pages with multiple resources
- PICK** = Good choice within the category for all audience
- LPHA** = Good choice for Local Public Health Agencies
- CBO** = Good choice for Community-Based Organizations
- Related** = Link to other, similar resource

UNDERSTANDING/ANALYZING/MANAGING DATA:

- Betty C. Jung's Compilation of Statistical Software Sites. [**META** | [Related](#)]
- Democratizing Data: Greater New Orleans Community Data Center. [**CBO**]
- Finding and Using Health Statistics – A Self-Study Course: National Library of Medicine.
- Guide for Public Health Agencies Developing, Adopting, or Purchasing Interactive Web-based Data Dissemination Systems: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [**LPHA**]
- Indispensable Information - Data Collection and Information Management for Healthier Communities: Urban Institute. [ | [Related](#)]
- Knowledge Management for Public Health Professionals: Association of State and Territorial Health Officials. []
- Public Health Data – Our Silent Partner. A Self Study Course by the National Center for Health Statistics: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- Supercourse Lectures by Topic: University of Pittsburgh. [**META** | **PICK**]
- Surveillance in a Suitcase: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



USING DATA & INFORMATION TO IMPROVE THE PUBLIC'S HEALTH:

- Bringing Policy Change to Your Community – Health Policy Guide: Center for Health Improvement. [**LPHA**]
- Building Community Capacity to Use Information – A Framework: Urban Institute. [ | [Related](#)]
- Environmental Law Institute. [**META** | [Related](#)]
- Health DATA (Data Advocacy & Technical Assistance): UCLA Center for Health Policy Research. [**CBO**]
- How Communities Create Solutions: Community Environmental Health Resources Center. [**PICK**]
- National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership – Publications: Urban Institute. [**META**]
- Neighborhoods and Health – Building Evidence for Local Policy: Urban Institute. []
- Partners in Information Access for the Public Health Workforce. [**META**]
- Research Tools: Data Center – Impact Research for Social Justice.
- Sustainability Starts in Your Community – A Community Indicators Guide: Redefining Progress. []
- Using Data – A Guide for Community Health Activists: Access Project. []
- Using Information in Community Building and Local Policy: Urban Institute. []

ADVOCACY:

- California Environmental Rights Alliance. [**CBO**]
- Environmental Defense – Action Center. [[Related](#)]
- Environmental Law Institute – Community Education and Training Program. [**META**]
- PolicyLink: a National Nonprofit Research, Communications, Capacity Building, and Advocacy Organization.
- Trust for America's Health.

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT & PROGRAM PLANNING:

- CDCynergy - a Multimedia Tool for Planning, Managing, and Evaluating Public Health Communication Programs: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- Community Tool Box: Work Group on Health Promotion and Community Development, University of Kansas. [**META**]
- Environmental Law Institute: Community Environmental Health Assessment Workbook. [ | **CBO**]
- Guide to Evaluating Your Community's Health and Finding Ways to Improve It: An Environmental Law Institute Workbook. [ | [Related](#)]
- Healthy People 2010 Environmental Health Objectives. [**LPHA** | [Related](#)]
- Healthy People in Healthy Communities – A Community Planning Guide Using Healthy People 2010: US Department of Health and Human Services. [[Related](#)]
- Protocol for Assessing Community Excellence in Environmental Health (PACE EH). [**PICK** | [Related](#)]
- Theory at a Glance – A Guide for Health Promotion Practice: National Cancer Institute.

GENERAL PUBLIC HEALTH PRACTICE & CAPACITY

- Center for Civic Partnership's Tools, Tips, & Resources. [**META** | **PICK**] ([see announcement on page 4](#))
- Local Health: Public Health Practice Program Office, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [**META**]
- Making the Case: Public Health Infrastructure Resource Center, Public Health Foundation.
- National Association of County & City Health Officials (NACCHO). [**META** | **LPHA**]
- Partnership for the Public Health's Resources. [**META**]
- Public Health, a Legislator's Guide: National Conference of State Legislatures. [**CBO** | [Related](#)]
- Public Health Foundation's Tools & Resources. [**META**]

continued on page 3

- **Public Health Infrastructure: Healthy People 2010.**
- **TrainingFinder Real-time Affiliate Integrated Network (TRAIN): Public Health Foundation.**

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH INFORMATION & RESEARCH:

- **Collaborative on Health and the Environment: Chemical Contamination and Human Disease – A Summary of Evidence.** [[PICK](#)]
- **Environmental Health Investigations Branch, CDHS.**

- **Environmental Health Perspectives – Open Access, Peer-Reviewed Research and News on Environmental Factors that Affect Human Health.** [[LPHA](#)]
- **Health and Environmental Data Sources: California Environmental Health Tracking Program.** [[META](#) | [Related](#)]
- **TOXNET – Databases on Toxicology, Hazardous Chemicals, and Related Areas.** [[Related](#)]

Feature Resource :: the Collaborative on Health and the Environment (CHE)

One of the best ways to increase personal knowledge and build organizational capacity is to connect with others who are working on similar issues and toward similar goals. A great forum in which to do this as well as learn about the role of environmental contaminants and other environmental factors in many of the common diseases, disorders and conditions is the Collaborative on Health and the Environment (CHE).



CHE is a nationwide network of 1400 organizational and individual Partners in 47 states and 18 countries. The purpose of CHE is to highlight emerging science in the environmental health field, share information on respective activities, incubate new ideas and opportunities, and invite Partners to present on particular environmental health themes.

CHE offers a number of working and discussion groups, which convene via listserv and teleconference. Some of these groups include: Cancer Working Group, Learning and Developmental Disabilities Initiative Working Group, Fertility/Early Pregnancy Compromise Working Group, and EMF Discussion Group on Electromagnetic Fields.

CHE invites researchers and scientists, health care providers, health affected groups, environmental health and justice advocates and anyone concerned about and committed to addressing environmental health issues and their link to chronic health problems. To find out more and to join CHE, visit the website at: www.cheforhealth.org or email Eleni Sotos, CHE National Coordinator at eleni@cheforhealth.org. Joining CHE means they promise to send only two e-mails a month from the CHE National listserv. CHE costs nothing to join and the benefits are shared information and opportunities for further engagement.

Increasing State Capacity and Infrastructure :: California Senate Bill 849 (Escutia)

For the 2005-2006 legislative session, Senator Martha Escutia has introduced the environmental health data tracking bill (SB 849). This bill would require the establishment of an Interagency Office of Environmental Health Tracking composed of the California Department of Health Services, the California Environmental Protection Agency (Cal/EPA), and the University of California for the purpose of implementing the California Health Tracking Program. Below are some key points from the bill. More information about the bill including the full text can be found at www.leginfo.ca.gov.

- California has an inadequate ongoing surveillance system to describe trends in environmental hazards or exposures and environmentally related diseases, and inadequate resources to carry out special studies to explain the trends or to explore the policy implications of its findings.
- Ongoing surveillance of environmentally related diseases and priority environmental hazards should be the function and responsibility of the State of California.
- There are multiple agencies in California that collect and manage health and environmental data, and those databases, which could be used for tracking, need to be updated and made uniform. However, there is a lack of systematic analysis of the data.
- There needs to be a coordinating body that brings these agencies together and promotes collaboration and sets the priorities for updating these databases and systems. The cost

to integrate, coordinate, and analyze the data is only a fraction of the cost of collecting the data. This Interagency Office of Environmental Health Tracking would have the following functions:

- Coordinate the multiple tracking data collection activities across various state agencies and work to promote access to priority databases in order to integrate data into the California Environmental Health Tracking System.
- Oversee the implementation of the recommendations of the final report of the [SB 702 Expert Working Group](#).
- Facilitate the dissemination of surveillance data to the public and researchers and provide technical assistance on how to interpret the data.
- Develop data sharing agreements and develop procedures to protect individual privacy.
- Collate and analyze data to identify trends and geographic patterns of disease and environmental hazards or exposures in relation to socioeconomic status, race, and ethnicity; provide baseline data and present descriptive information relevant to policy formation; develop a strategic plan, in consultation with the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, for obtaining missing information on chemicals as necessary for analyzing significant environmental exposures and potentially damaging health and environmental effects.

Other News and Updates *(Click >> for complete announcements/more information)*

Environmental Justice Small Grants >>

The US Environmental Protection Agency is soliciting grant applications from community-based organizations to support projects that address a community's exposure to multiple environmental harms and risks. The focus for this year's funding is collaborative partnerships.

Due date: April 4, 2005

Award amount: \$25,000 - \$75,000

Healthy Cities and Smart Growth: Planning for Healthier Communities >>

Center for Civic Partnerships Annual Conference

April 21-22, 2005

Doubletree Berkeley Marina, Berkeley, California

Improving the Public's Health: the Power of Collaboration >>

2005 Joint Annual Meeting of the California Public Health Association – North (CPHA-N) and the Southern California Public Health Association (SCPHA).

April 4 & 5, 2005

Hilton Oakland Airport, Oakland, California

Vision to Reality 2005 >>

The Second Annual National Environmental Public Health Tracking Conference – sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other governmental and non-governmental partners.

April 20–22, 2005

Atlanta, Georgia

Disclaimer: Links to non-CEHTP resources are provided solely as a service. These links do not constitute an endorsement of these resources and none should be inferred. CEHTP is not responsible for the content of the individual organization web pages or documents found at these links.

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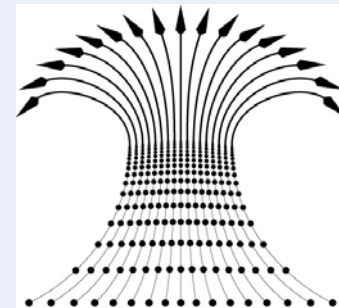
Visit our website: www.catracking.com

The California Environmental Health Tracking Program (CEHTP) is a collaborative initiative of the Division of Environmental and Occupational Disease Control of the California Department of Health Services (CDHS-DEODC), the Office of Environmental Health Hazards Assessment of the California Environmental Protection Agency (Cal/EPA-OEHHA), and the University of California and is funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

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