

**NATIONAL CONVERSATION ON PUBLIC HEALTH AND CHEMICAL EXPOSURES  
SERVING COMMUNITIES WORK GROUP**

**Meeting No. 6 Summary  
Teleconference  
March 24, 2010**

**Meeting Objectives:**

- Provide update on *National Conversation on Public Health and Chemical Exposures (National Conversation)* activities
- Discuss work of the four *National Conversation* Serving Communities Work Group (Serving Communities Work Group) subgroups, address concerns and questions
- Decide on next steps and assignments

Upcoming Meeting	When and Where	Suggested Agenda Items
Serving Communities in-person meeting	April 29–30, 2010 Washington, DC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Discuss recommendations and draft work group report</li><li>○ Time for subgroups to meet</li></ul>

**I. Action Items**

Serving Communities Work Group Subgroup Update	By Whom	By When
1. Send your latest subgroup report to Kim DeFeo, National Center for Environmental Health (NCEH)/Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) staff	Subgroups	April 22, 2010

**II. Meeting Summary**

**Welcome, Introductions, Agenda Review**

Peggy Shepard, Serving Communities Work Group chair, welcomed everyone and reviewed the agenda.

**National Conversation Update**

Kim DeFeo, NCEH/ATSDR staff, updated the group on the upcoming Web dialogue for April 5–7, 2010. She reminded work group members that the goals of this dialogue are for members of the public to understand and share their perspectives on the *National Conversation's* vision, structure, and key issues.

Ms. DeFeo also provided an update on the community conversations that the *National Conversation* is encouraging people to hold and encouraged people to consider hosting one. She shared that three pilot conversations are scheduled to test community conversation

materials and that feedback from these pilots would be considered and the materials revised accordingly. She also shared that NCEH/ATSDR, in coordination with the National Environmental Health Association, will be providing mini-grants, up to \$500, to eligible groups to help defray the costs of holding a conversation. Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis until funds are depleted; so she encouraged interested persons to apply early.

Ms. DeFeo also related that the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials held a needs assessment recently to gather input from state health officials about their needs relating to chemical exposures and public health. Similarly, the National Association of County and City Health Officials will be holding two forums to discuss the needs of local health officials. Reports summarizing the outcomes of these sessions will be available for review at the work group's in-person meeting so that these ideas can be incorporated into the work group recommendations.

### **Serving Communities Work Group Subgroup Update**

#### ***Restoring Health and Developing Community Resiliency Subgroup***

Restoring Health and Developing Community Resiliency Subgroup Leader Mildred McClain advised that, by the following Monday, she would have an updated draft of their subgroup report. The solutions the subgroup is discussing include increasing health and wellness, building capacity, and educating and connecting communities.

#### ***Community Advocacy, Leadership, and Research Subgroup***

Community Advocacy, Leadership, and Research Subgroup Leader Mark Mitchell reported that the subgroup has identified five areas of concern: 1) lack of trust and understanding among stakeholders (government, industry, community), 2) lack of knowledge in communities about public policy or how to influence it, 3) insufficient resources in communities to protect themselves from harmful chemical exposures, 4) community priorities for research not always the same as those of researchers, and 5) lack of universally accepted guidelines on who should be involved in community assessment or how it should be done.

Dr. Mitchell shared that the subgroup envisions communities being able to discuss their concerns, influence decision makers, and have access to the training and resources they need to participate in decisions that affect them. The subgroup also envisions that government agencies will be mandated to include the public in their decisions and work.

#### ***Addressing Past and Current, and Preventing Future, Environmental and Chemical Exposures Subgroup***

Addressing Past and Current, and Preventing Future, Environmental and Chemical Exposures Subgroup member Scott Levy outlined some of the issues the subgroup's members have discussed:

- 1) It is hard for the public to find out when permits are out for public comment, and not enough time is given for such comment.
- 2) Currently, members of the general public have to figure out how to collect data and information on the exposures in their own neighborhoods.
- 3) Fines are not effective in deterring violations of pollution laws.
- 4) National registries are not as useful as they could be—underreporting is common, and large time gaps exist between incidents and reporting.
- 5) Communities have difficulty getting grants to support their work.

Dr. Levy also outlined some solutions the subgroup has discussed: 1) stronger penalties for violations (fines, production bans); 2) incentives for industry for early reporting; 3) development

of an interagency network (a single place where a person could get needed information); and 4) development of a national health database to centralize medical records.

***Government Operations (Internal & External) Subgroup***

Government Operations (Internal & External) Subgroup member Liam O'Fallon reported that subgroup members have had limited time recently to work on its report but anticipate having more time after the in-person meeting. The group is discussing recommendations under several topic areas: training, partnerships and coordination, government operations, and miscellaneous. Subgroup members have looked at the problems, outcomes, and solutions for each topic area to begin developing recommendations.

After the subgroups finished their reports, Kathy Grant, RESOLVE facilitator, led a discussion about the ideas that were shared. The work group noted some possible duplication (for example, some overlap between the Government Operations (Internal & External) Subgroup and the Community Advocacy, Leadership, and Research Subgroup) but generally agreed that this duplication is okay for now. In response to questions, Ms. Grant clarified that the work group report template is the template for the full work group report. The work group asks that each subgroup develop no more than four recommendations. The full work group will discuss and refine these recommendations at its in-person meeting. Each recommendation should be accompanied by 1–2 explanatory paragraphs, including expected outcomes, how to implement the recommendation, suggested timeframe, and how to evaluate outcomes of the recommendation.

Ms. Grant reminded the work group that, at the upcoming in-person meeting, subgroups would have about 5 hours to meet face-to-face to work on their recommendations. She asked people to e-mail their latest drafts to Ms. DeFeo by April 22, 2010, so she could bring copies to the in-person meeting.

**III. Participation**

**Members Present**

Jeannie Economos, Farmworker Association of Florida

Derek Guest, formerly of Eastman Kodak Company, currently of Environmental and Sustainability Solutions

Rita Harris, Sierra Club Environmental Justice Program

Mercedes Hernandez-Pelletier, North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health

Michael Kent, Contra Costa Health Services

Scott Levy, The Permanente Medical Group

Egide Louis, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 4

Mildred McClain, Harambee House Inc./Citizens For Environmental Justice

Mark Mitchell, Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice

Liam O'Fallon, National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences

Suzi Ruhl, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Arturo Uribe, Mesquite Community Action Committee

**Regrets**

Lisa Conti, Florida Department of Health

Steve Crawford, Passamaquoddy Tribe at Pleasant Point

Melinda Downing, U.S. Department of Energy

Jerome (Jerry) Ensminger, Camp Lejeune Citizens Advisory Panel

Karla Fortunato, Health & Environmental Funders Network  
Lori Geckle, U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine  
Elizabeth Guillette, University of Florida  
Pamela Miller, Alaska Community Action on Toxics  
Sarah Norman, Baltimore City Health Department  
Barbara Sattler, University of Maryland School of Nursing  
Hilda Shepeard, Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry  
Kenneth Smith, National Association of County and City Health Officials  
Susan West Marmagas, Virginia Tech  
Beverly Wright, Deep South Center for Environmental Justice

**Facilitation and Staff Team Members Present**

Peggy Shepard, WE ACT for Environmental Justice; Serving Communities Work Group chair  
Carolyn Harper, NCEH/ATSDR senior liaison  
Kathy Grant, RESOLVE facilitator  
Kim DeFeo, NCEH/ATSDR staff