

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

**Meeting No. 9 Summary
Washington, DC
In-person meeting
August 18, 2010**

Meeting Objectives:

- Finalize and approve *National Conversation on Public Health and Chemical Exposures* Serving Communities Work Group (Serving Communities Work Group) recommendations
- Review remaining sections of the work group report, develop language to fill any gaps, and finalize and approve each section (time permitting)
- Discuss next steps in preparing work group report for submission to the *National Conversation on Public Health and Chemical Exposures* Leadership Council (Leadership Council) and for reviewing Leadership Council and public comment on the report

I. Meeting Summary

Welcome, Introductions and Agenda Review

Peggy Shepard, Serving Communities Work Group chair, opened the meeting by welcoming the group. She stated that the main goal of the meeting was to finalize and approve the work group's recommendations. Charles Lee, director of the Office of Environmental Justice of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), welcomed the group to EPA and stressed the importance of the work that the group has been doing. He shared that the Interagency Working Group (IWG) on Environmental Justice is about to be reconvened and also that EPA will be accepting public comment on its Plan EJ 2014, an overarching strategy intended to advance environmental justice, until October 1, 2010.

Kathy Grant, RESOLVE facilitator, reviewed the agenda and reminded everyone that the work group draft reports are due on August 31, 2010. The reports will then be posted online for two weeks for public comment. The work group will have a final call in October to discuss any revisions to the work group report based on input from the public and the Leadership Council.

A Serving Communities Work Group member expressed her desire to ensure the recommendations in the Action Agenda are implemented. Another work group member agreed and said that those interested in seeing these recommendations implemented cannot rely only on the Leadership Council, but must take an active role. She suggested the group consider creating a body to help coordinate implementing the recommendations after the *National Conversation* ends.

Discussion: Work Group Recommendations

The Serving Communities Work Group discussed all of the recommendations under consideration in order to prioritize the top 12.

Mandate government agencies to involve communities at the earliest possible stages and throughout environmental decision making processes.

One member suggested using the word “engagement” instead of “involvement” in the text of the recommendation. Another suggestion was that, in addition to recommending an Executive Order be enacted to mandate community engagement, the work group include the enactment of rules or policies as another way to accomplish this goal. The group agreed to recommend that the IWG on Environmental Justice develop a policy within the next two years to mandate community engagement in environmental decision making processes.

Provide communities with funding and other resources to become effective self advocates.

The work group decided to combine this recommendation with another recommendation: Provide communities with funding and technical resources to conduct independent research necessary to document local problems.

Establish a standard process for government agencies to use in assessing the health effects of exposures to environmental threats.

The work group agreed to combine this recommendation with another recommendation: Establish a national health outcomes database. Combining access to more health data through a national health outcomes database would facilitate environmental health research. The members agreed that community members should be involved in this effort.

Develop coordinating structures and mechanisms across agencies.

The group decided to remove the reference to Incident Command Structure in this recommendation.

Establish, facilitate, and promote training programs for government employees, community groups and residents, academia, and Americorps-like volunteers.

Work group members discussed adding environmental justice competency training to the list of suggested trainings mentioned in this recommendation.

Review ATSDR mission and mandate to ensure it serves public health more effectively.

The group agreed this recommendation is important and that an independent panel should be formed to review ATSDR’s mission.

Serve as a model and lead the way!

The group agreed that the part of this recommendation that discusses community engagement mechanisms should be folded into the first recommendation: Mandate that government agencies involve communities at the earliest possible stages and throughout environmental decision making processes.

Ensure effective compliance of industrial and Department of Defense facilities and agricultural operations.

The group agreed that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration should be added as a potential actor in this recommendation.

Develop citizen suit provisions to empower communities.

The group added language to this recommendation about Supplemental Environmental Projects.

Increase access to health care and health care for environmental justice populations.

A work group member suggested that Alaska Natives be specifically mentioned in this recommendation.

Provide health and health care that is informed by the relationship between the environment and health.

The work group agreed to re-focus and re-word this recommendation to say “incorporate reimbursable environmental health services into primary health care services.”

Reform government decision making.

The work group decided to eliminate this recommendation but to include ideas from it in the introductory and conclusion sections of the report.

The group agreed to add a new recommendation to address the permitting process: “Federal permitting agencies shall revise permitting and permit renewal processes to include a standardized method for consideration of existing exposures and underlying health status of the community when responding to a request for an environmental permit and develop a meaningful mechanism by which communities can influence permitting processes on the basis of public health concerns.”

Small Group Working Sessions to Revise Recommendations

During the second part of the meeting, the work group met in small working groups to hone the recommendations and incorporate the edits discussed earlier in the day. The work group then reconvened to share the revisions and agreed to a set of 12 revised recommendations. A few remaining edits will be sent to the Serving Communities Work Group’s Leadership Team a few days after the meeting to incorporate in the final draft work group report.

There were no comments from the public.

Next Steps

Before adjourning, Ms. Grant reviewed the next steps. She requested that final edits be sent as soon as possible. Kim DeFeo, National Center for Environmental Health/Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, will help compile the edits. A final draft will be sent to the work group before August 31, 2010. A final work group call will be held in October in order to consider input from the public and the Leadership Council and to finalize the work group report.

II. Participation

Members Present:

- Steve Crawford, Passamaquoddy Tribe at Pleasant Point
- Derek Guest, Environmental and Sustainability Solutions
- Rita Harris, Sierra Club Environmental Justice Program
- Mercedes Hernández-Pelletier, NC 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
- Pam Miller, Alaska Community Action on Toxics
- Mark Mitchell, Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice
- Liam O’Fallon, National Institute for Environmental Health Sciences

Final Document

- Suzi Ruhl, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Environmental Justice
- Barbara Sattler, University of Maryland School of Nursing
- Hilda Sheppard, Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry
- Arturo Uribe, Mesquite Community Action Committee

Regrets:

- Lisa Conti, Florida Department of Health
- Jeannie Economos, Farmworker Association of Florida
- Karla Fortunato, Health & Environmental Funders Network
- Lori Geckle, U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine

Facilitation and Staff Team Members Present:

- Peggy Shepard, WE ACT
- Carolyn Harper, Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry
- Kim DeFeo, National Center for Environmental Health/Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry
- Kathy Grant, RESOLVE