



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

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OFFICE OF
RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

J. Routt Reigart, MD
Chair, Children's Health Protection Advisory Committee
Medical University of South Carolina
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Charleston, South Carolina 29425

Dear Dr. Reigart:

Thank you for your March 19, 2002, letter and recommendations regarding the collection, analysis, and dissemination of data relevant to children's environmental health. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) remains fully committed to its leadership role in children's environmental health through the efforts of our Office of Children's Health Protection and a vigorous research program in the Office of Research and Development (ORD). In addition, several of our program offices have high-priority activities aimed at collecting and disseminating information on children's environmental health. EPA is also committed to filling important information gaps through its research efforts and regulatory programs.

ORD is conducting state-of-the-art research on children's environmental health. Both the extramural and intramural research programs conduct innovative studies to collect high-quality data on children's exposure to toxic chemicals and the potential effect of these exposures on children's health. This includes data on the concentrations of toxic chemicals in and around children's homes and schools, behavioral factors among children that may result in higher exposures when compared to adults, and information on the potential heightened susceptibilities of children to the effects of these chemicals. These efforts are coordinated with relevant stakeholders through continuous review and cooperative research efforts.

We too recognize the need to identify those populations of children which are at the highest risk from environmental contaminants by implementing both research and programmatic efforts. Since 1993, the Agency has been conducting studies aimed at determining the factors that lead children to be more highly exposed to toxic chemicals. This has led to a series of studies among such high-risk groups as children living in agricultural communities and inner-city children. More recently, we have implemented studies to evaluate environmental risks among children who rely on subsistence diets and children with elevated risk for lead poisoning. On the regulatory side, we have developed a National Environmental Justice Mapping Tool Work Group. This group will identify a set of environmental justice indicators which can be used as a



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baseline by all regional and headquarters programs for conducting preliminary environmental justice assessments and will provide recommendations on developing national scale tools for conducting preliminary environmental justice assessments. These tools will be useful in identifying populations of children at highest risk.

The Agency is also investing in the development of various tools for integrating health and environmental data to assess risk and potential risk among children. This includes exposure models that integrate environmental and behavioral data to estimate and predict exposures among children and innovative risk assessment methods that combine information on exposure and toxicity. For example, the Stochastic Human Exposure and Dose Simulation Model (SHEDS) can assess aggregate pesticide exposure and dose. ORD is also sponsoring epidemiological studies through programs such as the Centers of Excellence for Children's Environmental Health and Disease Prevention Research. These Centers have developed cohorts which are being used to study the relationships between the environment and diseases such as asthma, by integrating health information and exposure related data.

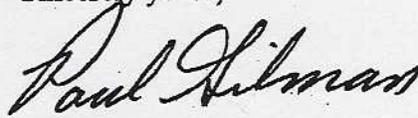
I very much appreciate your recommendations concerning the quality and dissemination of data related to children's environmental health. We have implemented a variety of efforts aimed at improving data quality, integration and access. The Central Data Exchange (CDX) will serve as a single point of entry for many environmental data submissions to the Agency. As part of our overall redesign of EPA's information architecture, we are currently working on infrastructure for information access as well as the collection of information that is incorporated into the CDX. To improve public access to the CDX, we are also developing a Public Access Strategy which will move our efforts in the direction you suggest. Specifically, the Strategy recognizes that the specific data and information needs of stakeholder groups; such as the children's health community, are absolutely fundamental to providing good public access. It also considers approaches for reaching socially disadvantaged groups that may not have easy access to environmental data.

The Agency is currently working with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Agency for Toxic Substances Disease Registry (ATSDR) to plan an Environmental Public Health Tracking Network, similar in concept to the EPA's National Environmental Information Exchange Network. A strategy is being developed for an integrated tracking system that includes a trained environmental health workforce, particularly at the state and local levels, and improved collaboration among the agencies and organizations with public health and environmental responsibilities. The CDC and ATSDR have assembled more than 60 scientists, managers, and policy specialists from other Federal agencies, including EPA and HUD, academia, advocacy groups, professional organizations, and state and local public health and environment agencies and the national organizations that represent these agencies, to serve on workgroups to address implementation issues.

I want to ensure you that EPA is committed to making the high-quality environmental health data and information available to as many segments of the populations as possible and to protecting the environmental health of our children.

Thank you again for your interest in EPA's children's environmental health programs. Should you have any questions, please contact Dr. Peter Preuss at 202-564-6825

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul Gilman". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Paul Gilman, Ph.D.
Assistant Administrator