Office of Children’s Health Protection

OCHP’S VISION
All children, especially those in underserved communities, thrive by living, learning, and playing free from environmental exposures that contribute to harmful health effects.

OCHP’S MISSION
Protect and promote children’s environmental health.

OCHP’S GOAL
Apply and promote the use of science, policy, partnerships, communications, and research to further protect all children from the health effects resulting from harmful environmental exposures.

PROTECTION OF CHILDREN’S HEALTH FROM ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER
Protecting children from the effects of environmental exposure during early life (from conception, infancy, early childhood through adolescence until 21 years of age) is imperative because children are at greater risk to environmental contaminants than adults due to differences in behavior and biology, and because the effects of early life exposures may also arise in adulthood or in later generations. Many indicators of children’s environmental health show improvement over the past years. Unfortunately, some rates of exposure and/or health effects have not improved or have gotten worse, and many environmental hazards disproportionately impact minorities and children living in poverty.

OBJECTIVES
The Office of Children’s Health Protection (OCHP) developed this Strategic Plan to prioritize and communicate our planned activities from 2022 to 2025. The timeframe, scope and objectives match the EPA’s Strategic Plan 2022-20251, which includes a cross-agency strategy to Consider the Health of Children at All Life Stages and Other Vulnerable Populations.

1 https://www.epa.gov/planandbudget стратегический план
To accomplish our vision, OCHP has established three objectives:

**Objective 1:** Use Science and Policy to Strengthen Protection for Children at All Life Stages

**Objective 2:** Strengthen and Expand Partnerships and Provide Leadership

**Objective 3:** Address Disparities in Children’s Environmental Health

**APPROACH**

OCHP’s objectives are informed by the EPA’s 2021 *Policy on Children’s Health*, which recognized the following seven elements:

1. Children's environmental health refers to the effect of environmental exposure during early life: from conception, infancy, early childhood and through adolescence until 21 years of age.

2. The health effects of early life environmental exposures may also arise in adulthood or in later generations.

3. Childhood is a life stage experienced by everyone, and exposure to environmental hazards during early life is a key consideration in the assessment of how environmental impacts shape human health over the course of a lifetime.

4. Children can be at a greater risk to environmental hazards due to unique activity patterns, behaviors, and biology. They have unique behaviors such as breast feeding, crawling and hand-to-mouth activity that may contribute to increased exposure. Children eat more food, drink more water, and breathe more air in proportion to their body size as compared to adults, and the variety of the foods they consume is more limited.

5. The timing of exposure to environmental hazards is critical in protecting human health. The same dose during different periods of development can have very different health consequences.

6. Children who live in highly exposed or underserved communities may have reduced biological resilience and ability to recover from exposure to environmental hazards. With new threats and worsening conditions resulting from climate change, the EPA has a greater responsibility to provide children with heightened focus, assessment, and safeguards to protect their health.

7. It is important to account for health risks associated with both environmental and social determinants of health to better protect children in environmental justice communities.

---

2 [https://www.epa.gov/children/epas-policy-childrens-health](https://www.epa.gov/children/epas-policy-childrens-health)
OBJECTIVE 1: USE SCIENCE AND POLICY TO STRENGTHEN PROTECTION FOR CHILDREN AT ALL LIFE STAGES

OCHP will:

- Work with the EPA programs and offices to identify, evaluate, and promote the use of science to support EPA policies, decisions, and actions, including regulations and voluntary programs, that protect children’s environmental health.

- Serve as a resource and partner with EPA program and regional offices conducting toxicity, exposure, and risk assessments, and developing policies, regulations, and programs to consider the unique vulnerabilities of all children.

- Support the development of new science to address gaps in knowledge regarding risks at all life stages. Partner with EPA’s Office of Research and Development, other EPA programs and organizations to advance scientific research on the impacts of early life exposure.

- Seek input from the OCHP-led Children’s Health Protection Advisory Committee (CHPAC)\(^3\) to obtain expert advice on regulations, research, and communications related to children’s environmental health from this body of external researchers, academicians, health care providers, environmentalists, state and tribal government employees, and members of the public.

- In collaboration with EPA programs and offices, update existing and develop new children’s environmental health indicator data to track progress, communicate trends, and identify areas that warrant additional attention.

- Lead development of additional measures of benefits arising from protecting against the environmental health impacts of early life exposure and take these benefits into account in decision making.

- Develop a better understanding of and address children’s environmental health issues related to climate change, natural disasters, and other public health emergencies.

---

\(^3\) The CHPAC is a federal advisory committee which provides advice, information, and recommendations to assist the EPA in the development of regulations, guidance, and policies to address children’s environmental health. For more information, see [https://www.epa.gov/children/chpac](https://www.epa.gov/children/chpac).
OBJECTIVE 2: STRENGTHEN AND EXPAND PARTNERSHIPS AND PROVIDE LEADERSHIP

OCHP will:

- Lead the President’s Task Force on Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks to Children (PTF), together with the Department of Health and Human Services, to make recommendations to the President on federal strategies to advance children’s environmental health nationwide.

  The PTF facilitates information exchange, targeted research planning, and program implementation coordination across the federal agencies. It also enhances public outreach to support reduction in environmental exposures and risks to children’s health throughout the country.

- Work with EPA regions, through Regional Children’s Health and Schools Coordinators, to develop and support partnerships. Implement programs to support protection of children’s environmental health, particularly in homes, child-care settings, and in schools.

- Lead and fully support the integration of children’s environmental health into the day-to-day activities of EPA’s programs and regional offices.

- Provide national leadership by working with governmental and non-governmental environmental and health organizations and provide opportunities to support understanding and application of the latest science and evidence-based information on children’s environmental health exposure and effects.

- Seek input from and leverage the capabilities of diverse groups by engaging partners and stakeholders, providing opportunities to develop and share evidence-based information, and distributing information through training, tools sharing, conferences, and electronic media including the web and social media.

- Support health care professionals, including those who provide pediatric and maternal health expertise at the Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Units (PEHSUs), to better address real time risks from childhood exposures to environmental pollution and other stressors.

- Enhance public outreach to assist families and caregivers in making informed choices about reducing detrimental environmental exposures and improving children’s environmental health.

- Strengthen internal collaborations within EPA to promote children’s environmental health internationally.
OBJECTIVE 3: ADDRESS HEALTH DISPARITIES IN CHILDREN’S ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

OCHP will, working with EPA programs and offices:

- Protect and promote the protection of children who live in highly polluted or underserved communities, or suffer from cumulative impacts, as they may have reduced resilience and ability to recover from exposure to environmental hazards.

- Collaborate with partners to identify factors, develop solutions, and implement strategies that advance environmental health protection for children in vulnerable populations.

- Add indicators of social determinants of health and climate change to reports that document trends in children’s environmental health.

- Partner with environmental justice efforts at EPA and at the federal level to promote children’s environmental health in underserved communities.

- Strengthen partnerships with states and tribal governments, to address children’s environmental health concerns of unique populations, including indigenous peoples.

EVALUATING PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS

OCHP will continuously evaluate its performance to ensure steady progress and will communicate results to partners, stakeholders, and the public.

As part of the EPA’s Strategic Plan 2022-2025, OCHP will measure progress on Objective 1 through the Long-Term Performance Goal: “By September 30, 2026, assess and consider environmental health information and data for children at all life stages for all completed EPA actions that concern human health.”

As part of the EPA’s Strategic Plan 2022-2025, OCHP will measure progress on Objective 2 through an Annual Performance Goal by tracking the number of EPA regional offices with stakeholder engagement on children’s environmental health designated to provide durable, replicable, and widespread results.”

In succeeding years, OCHP will consider updating key measures corresponding to major activities undertaken under each objective of this plan. OCHP plans to make available publicly the results of its work.