



2016

A Blueprint for Protecting Children's Environmental Health: An Urgent Call to Action

Overview

Children First: the Need for Action

Despite the many successes and advancements in the field of children's environmental health over the past few decades, today's children face an epidemic of illnesses and chronic diseases linked to environmental exposures and our changing climate.

There is an urgent need to put children and families back into the forefront of our nation's actions regarding health and environment.

All working in the field of children's environment health must rally and work together to meet this need.

"We believe that every child has an inalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Fundamental to that vision is the right of all children to play and learn, to breathe, to eat and drink, and to dream safely cradled by their families and communities. All children should live free from violence, racism, poverty, hunger, life trauma, and poisons that will keep them from living up to their full potential. Indeed, society's soul is truly revealed by the way in which it treats its children."

- Wingspread Participants

Some Risky Facts

- 22% of America's children live in poverty
- 18% are obese
- 46% reside in hazardous housing
- 66% live in poor air quality areas

Children of color and those who live in poverty experience greater exposures and have poorer outcomes.

America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being. 2013.

The State of America's Children. 2014.

Who Are America's Children? Examining Health Disparities Among Children in the United States. 2011.

Leaders Convene, Create and Commit to a Vision

Recognizing the need for action, several children's environmental health leaders led by the Children's Environmental Health Network created a new proactive vision for children's environmental health in the 21st century. The work began in 2012, with support from the W. K. Kellogg and the Johnson Family Foundations, and included information interviews, drafting of key background resources such as a white paper on the history of children's environmental health, and culminated in a historic summit of over 30 leaders from diverse backgrounds and perspectives at Wingspread, headquarters of the Johnson Family Foundation, in Wisconsin in October of 2014.

In this remarkable setting, the leaders crafted and committed to a [dynamic vision statement](http://www.cehn.org/our-work/blueprint-for-protecting-childrens-health/vision-statement/) (<http://www.cehn.org/our-work/blueprint-for-protecting-childrens-health/vision-statement/>) that calls for transformative change through renewed and collective action to provide all children with the protections from harm.

They also developed an outline of a blueprint for action that places children at the center of all key decision-making moving forward.



2016

The Blueprint: A Framework and 5 Recommendations

In the year following the summit, with input from key leaders, the [Blueprint](http://www.cehn.org/our-work/blueprint-for-protecting-childrens-health) (<http://www.cehn.org/our-work/blueprint-for-protecting-childrens-health>) was developed. The Blueprint includes five umbrella recommendations, each with its own rationale, challenges, and actions.

- 1: Mobilize “society” to take action on children’s environmental health – Place a strong priority on children and families.
- 2: Create knowledge essential for effective action and make use of the knowledge we have.
- 3: Marshal the engine of the economy to achieve environments in which children can thrive and enjoy abundant opportunity for building a sustainable, economically secure future
- 4: Build the political will in our institutions of government for child-centered policies.
- 5: Establish a connected and vibrant children’s environmental health community.

The Need for Action is Now – Steps in 2016

A process to move the Blueprint into action has begun. A circle of leaders and early adopters have committed to the Blueprint and have identified critical steps for success for 2016.

- ✓ Secure funds to support coordination, workgroups, the production of key resources and more
- ✓ Form a leadership body – to define overarching measurable target goals, prioritize recommendations, help to craft key resources, provide ongoing oversight and guidance
- ✓ Develop and disseminate resources for the Blueprint specifically and to benefit the children’s environmental health community such as principles, a suite of “Indicators” and a messaging platform and begin the process to develop a Children’s Bill of Rights
- ✓ Activate and coordinate work groups – charged with developing and implementing plans for each of the recommendations – including measurable outcomes
- ✓ Identify and secure partners and foster collaboration -- toward a connected and vibrant community

**TO JOIN THE EFFORT AND WORK TO PROTECT CHILDREN: Contact Tracy Kolian
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