

## **Notes from CPHI Retreat Small Group Session: Environmental Exposures Affecting Health**

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There were five participants in this small group session. Participants included: Michelle Niedermeier (Philadelphia School & Community Integrated Pest Management Partnership), Rob Simmons (Jefferson MPH Program), Alice Wright (PA Dept. of Environmental Protection), Maria Wolf (CEET), and Betsy Brooks (MPH student).

### Recommendations for Important Next Steps:

- There is a major need to bring diverse groups together to collaborate on environmental health issues. Participants noted somewhat of a current disconnect among many organizations working on issues that are all interrelated and can be connected to environmental health.
- Future efforts must emphasize a holistic approach and demonstrate how the environment, economy, health, and crime (for example) can be related. Inter- and intra-agency dialogue is needed to bring together agencies, industry, and government.
- This need for a collaborative approach, or perhaps a coalition bringing together various voices, could be galvanized if the city of Philadelphia were to make it a priority. A city emphasis or directive would facilitate diverse groups working together. This coalition should also bring its ideas and findings before local and regional authorities such as the regional EPA and HHS offices.
- Organizing a conference for mayors and legislators or presenting testimonials in Harrisburg are potential next steps. A number of groups putting forward a proposal in this field would be more powerful than one group alone.
- Future undertakings should be rather local and concrete at first. The current Healthy Homes project is a good place to focus future efforts. This project should also be expanded into a Healthy Blocks or Neighborhoods approach, as the actions of your neighbors can greatly affect the environment in which you live. Implementing a Healthy Blocks project could bring attention to a cluster of important and connected issues, mainly energy, environment, health, and productivity. Lead and pest management programs should also continue.
- The need for data measuring concrete outcomes is crucial for future success. There must be evidence-based proposals in order to ensure funding and sustainable programs. Participants felt that a city-sponsored Healthy Homes initiative and data-sharing partnerships would facilitate new ways to measure and track outcomes.
- One recommendation is to get questions about the environment, health, and outcomes added to the PHMC Household Health Survey. Some potential questions might measure the following: respondents' social environments; connectivity with neighbors; perceptions of respondents' health, homes, and blocks; Emergency Room visits; local violence; levels of asthma and other

Ambulatory Sensitive Conditions; recreation levels; productivity; and educational and school success.

- Public health must be incorporated into environmental policy. When new operations are located in a community, there should first be assessments of the health of local residents.
- CPHI should continue to improve local collaboration and bring together various groups in roundtables, similar to what occurred at this year's retreat.