

President's Task Force on Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks to Children



“ We must take action for our children and grandchildren’s sake, and we must work together to reduce risks from environmental exposure at home, school, and play areas. Through coordinated efforts like that of the President’s Task Force on Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks to Children, my Administration will continue to empower Federal interagency collaboration to help ensure healthy homes and communities exist for our children. ”

—President Obama, proclaiming October 4, 2010 as Child Health Day

In April 1997, President Clinton issued *Executive Order 13045*, establishing the President’s Task Force on Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks to Children. In 2010, the Obama Administration charged the Task Force with:

- Identifying priority issues of environmental health and safety risks to children that are best addressed through interagency efforts
- Developing strategies to protect children’s environmental health and safety
- Recommending and implementing interagency actions
- Communicating information to federal, state, and local decision makers for use in protecting children from environmental health and safety risks

The Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services and the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency co-chair the Task Force, which comprises representatives of 17 federal departments and White House offices. A Steering Committee of senior staff coordinates interagency cooperation on the Task Force priority focus areas. Currently, these include: asthma disparities, healthy homes, chemical exposures, and climate change.

Asthma Disparities

In May 2012, the President’s Task Force on Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks to Children released the [Coordinated Federal Action Plan to Reduce Racial and Ethnic Asthma Disparities](#).

The goal of the *Action Plan* is to reduce burden of asthma among minority children and those with family incomes below the poverty level. The plan promotes synergy and alignment across numerous federal programs. It emphasizes priority actions to address preventable factors that lead to asthma disparities.

The *Action Plan* is organized around four strategies:

- Reduce barriers to the implementation of guidelines-based asthma management
- Enhance capacity to deliver integrated, comprehensive asthma care to children in communities with racial and ethnic asthma disparities
- Improve capacity to identify the children most impacted by asthma disparities
- Accelerate efforts to identify and test interventions that may prevent the onset of asthma

Healthy Homes

Unhealthy and inadequate housing can disproportionately affect the health of children. In February 2013, the Federal Healthy Homes Work Group, under the guidance of the Task Force, released *Advancing Healthy Housing – A Strategy for Action*. The concept of a healthy home includes at least eight characteristics: dry, clean, pest-free, safe, contaminant-free, well ventilated, well maintained, and thermally controlled. The *Strategy for Action* aims to reduce the number of American homes with residential health and safety hazards through achievement of five goals and priority actions:

- Establish healthy homes recommendations
- Encourage adoption of healthy homes recommendations
- Create and support training and workforce development to address health hazards in housing, including by building a cadre of trained experts to deliver healthy homes services such as weatherization and retrofitting
- Educate the public about healthy homes
- Support research that informs and advances healthy housing in a cost-effective manner

Chemical Exposures & Lead

Children are not just “small adults.” Myriad factors, such as differences in metabolism; amount of air they breathe; food they eat and water they drink relative to weight; and their still developing bodies may increase the susceptibility of children to negative health effects from exposure to toxic agents. The Task Force is a forum for discussion and collaboration on issues related to children’s toxic exposures including:

- Childhood lead poisoning prevention and the health effects of low-level lead exposure
- Effects of endocrine disruptors, such as Bisphenol A, on children’s health and development
- Cumulative effects of exposures to phthalates on human reproduction and development
- Needs for biomonitoring data on very young children

Climate Change

Children are uniquely vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Federal agencies engaging in climate change mitigation and adaptation need to understand how children may be exposed and affected by the plethora of human health threats posed by climate change, including: heat waves, extreme weather, air and water quality changes, vectorborne and zoonotic diseases, food quality and security, and mental health issues. The Task Force has begun to explore these issues through the following activities:

- Convened an expert consultation on climate change and children’s health
- Engaging in a Policy Roundup to share programs and policies from across the nation that are being used to protect children’s health from the impacts of climate change
- Building a federal community of practice around climate change impacts on children’s health

On July 10, 2014 the Task Force convened an expert consultation on climate change and children’s health. The meeting served to inform the US GCRP’s climate and health assessment.

Task Force Members

- Assistant to the President for Economic Policy
- Assistant to the President on Domestic Policy
- Consumer Product Safety Commission
- Council of Economic Advisors
- Council on Environmental Quality
- Department of Agriculture
- Department of Education
- Department of Energy
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Department of Homeland Security
- Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Department of Justice
- Department of Labor
- Department of Transportation
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Office of Management and Budget
- Office of Science and Technology Policy