



IN THIS ISSUE

As we plan for an Environmental Health Tracking Network in California, we are taking steps to ensure that we involve stakeholders and understand their needs and concerns.

This issue highlights some of the program components that are facilitating stakeholder participation and identifying a broad spectrum of stakeholder issues, needs, priorities and concerns related to Environmental Health Tracking.

We look forward to continued collaboration with our stakeholders and to translating findings and recommendations into long-term program strategies as well as program activities such as outreach and training.

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Senate Bill 702* Expert Working Group's Findings/ Recommendations on Stakeholder and Community Needs

One of the goals of an Environmental Health Tracking Network is to make information about environmental impacts on health available to the public in an accessible and useful format. In order to best understand the public's information needs, the SB702 Expert Working Group included, in their deliberations, members of the public and representatives of community-based organizations. Public comment sessions combined with structured presentations enabled the working group to learn about the issues, questions, and challenges facing individuals and organizations.

The Expert Working Group found that environmental health disparities are a major concern among community-based organizations and the public. Members of the public consistently cited the need for scientifically valid and personally relevant information about health and the environment.

In Chapter 6 of [*Strategies for Establishing an Environmental Health Surveillance System in California: A Report of the SB 702 Expert Working Group*](#), the working group documents the needs articulated by stakeholders, relate these issues to other aspects of public health and environmental policy, and discuss observations regarding the confluence of purpose among researchers, policymakers, and the public on information about health and the environment.

The working group identified organizations engaged in community-based research and health-promotion activities in order to understand their motivations, methods, barriers to conducting their work, and opportunities for collaboration with the tracking system. During the Expert Working

Group meetings, representatives from seven organizations made presentations about the following issues:

- Priority public-health and/or environmental-hazard concerns in their community.
- Health surveys or other data-collection activities regarding environmental health/environmental justice issues in which their organization is involved.
- Barriers or lessons learned while engaging in this process.
- Resource needs that would help organizations to better understand and communicate their community's priorities and concerns regarding environmental health issues.

Three case studies found Chapter 6 summarize some of these presentations in order to provide a more complete description of community activities and needs related to environmental health.

Other key issues discussed in Chapter 6 include:

- Information access and consolidation.
- Community capacity building, resources, and training needs.
- Policy-relevant information.
- Facilitating community-based research.
- Disease cluster investigation/response.
- Meaningful community involvement.

Dr. Joseph Lyou, Executive Director of the [*California Environmental Rights Alliance*](#), and SB702 Expert Working Group member spoke to these community issues at a February 24th press conference for the release of the SB702 report. His statement, along with related press materials, can be found at www.catracking.com.

*Senate Bill 702 (Escutia) declared the legislature's intent to establish an environmental health surveillance system. SB 702 required the Division of Environmental and Occupational Disease Control of the Department of Health Services, in cooperation with the California Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment and the University of California, to establish a working group of technical experts to devise possible approaches to establishing such a system, including measurements needed to monitor Californians' health, a database to facilitate examination of the relationship between chronic diseases and the environment over time, and the estimated cost for each approach.

The final SB702 Report is now available at www.catracking.com

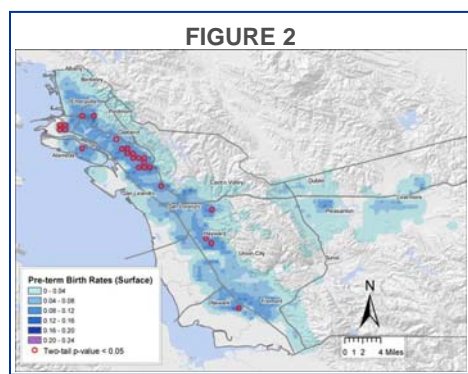
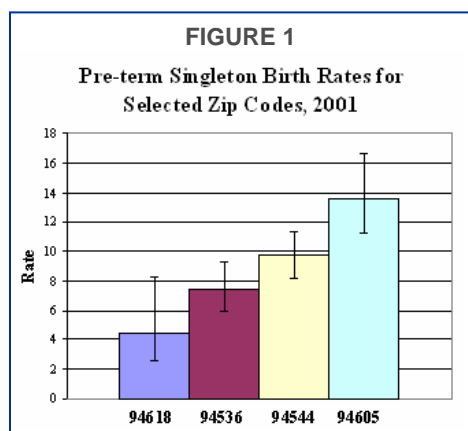
Learning about Stakeholder Needs through the Alameda County Pilot Project

Background:

The California Environmental Health Tracking Program is involving stakeholders and identifying their needs and issues through the Alameda County Demonstration Project. This project will serve as a "road test" of an Environmental Health Tracking Network by linking datasets for traffic pollution, birth outcomes, and asthma-related health care use for Alameda County for 2001. The intent is to incorporate stakeholder feedback into the strategic plan for an Environmental Health Tracking Network. In January 2004, we completed an analysis of the birth outcomes data and presented the results at the first of a series of stakeholder input meetings.

Initial Findings:

Based on anticipated stakeholder interests, rates of pre-term birth and term low birthweight were quantified by zip code (see FIGURE 1), race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. In addition to these results, zip code maps and "smoothed" maps were created (see FIGURE 2). The results were consistent with those from previous studies on health disparities. Additionally, we found that the smoothed maps provide better resolution and better represent reality than zip code maps. However, we still needed to find out if these findings were useful to our stakeholders, what would make them more useful, and how we should create and disseminate materials based on these findings.



Stakeholder Input/Response:

Representatives of local CBOs, NGOs, health departments, service providers, city councilpersons, and the EPA attended the first stakeholder meeting. Staff presented an introduction to tracking, initial birth outcomes findings, and a preliminary Internet-based interactive interface. Participants provided feedback (right column) regarding their information needs. For detailed stakeholder feedback from the meeting, visit www.catracking.com/sub/pp1t.htm.

Next Steps:

The information requested by participants will be incorporated as feasible, and birth outcomes materials will be created. These materials will be reviewed by the group and revised based on feedback. We are also conducting analysis of the asthma data, which will be presented at the next stakeholder input meeting in May.

Summary of Stakeholder Feedback:

General information needs

- Data analysis that addresses community needs and interests
- Institutionalized data collection and application of results in Environmental Justice communities
- Capacity building and technical assistance for communities to collect and use data
- Strategies for communities to use information
- Regular updates on research results and the effects on the community

Specific information needs for birth outcomes results

- Compare health outcomes with school data, air data, health care data, and economic/social factors
- Economic effects: cost-benefit analyses in terms of hazard, illness, interventions
- Specific information about a variety of geographic areas with multiple geographic scales

How birth outcomes results may be used

- Advocacy
- Organizing
- Identifying affected groups
- Targeting resources/services
- Precautionary arguments
- Grant applications
- Assessing impact programs/interventions
- Housing code enforcement

Concerns about results

- Potential misuse by health insurance companies, housing lenders, etc. against certain areas or affected groups

Information access and dissemination

- Language and literacy
- Materials should be accessible by Internet, printed and easily replicable
- Internet can also be a barrier to access
- Technical assistance
- Preferred formats of information included: website, interactive interface, fact sheets, brochures, maps, reports

Statewide Stakeholder Group :: The CEHTP Planning Consortium

In order to involve stakeholders, address their needs and issues, and utilize their expertise in planning for an Environmental Health Tracking Network, the California Environmental Health Tracking Program (CEHTP) has convened a Planning Consortium composed of representatives from local agencies, community-based and non-governmental organizations, environmental advocacy groups, the University of California, and state and federal agencies such as US EPA, California Department of Health Services, and Cal/EPA.

The Planning Consortium has met three times and has contributed significantly toward planning for an Environmental Health Tracking Network in California; especially toward our understanding of stakeholder perspectives and needs. Summary of the group's discussions can be found in the meeting materials folder at www.catracking.com/sub/pc.htm.

In future meetings, the Planning Consortium will facilitate the development of protocols and policies for an Environmental Health Tracking Network in California. Examples include: accountability mechanisms, transparency policies, stakeholder involvement/public participation guidelines, procedures for responding to community concerns/requests, etc. For more information about the CEHTP Planning Consortium, please contact Mimi Johnson at mjohnson@dhs.ca.gov.

Statewide Needs Assessment Survey Results :: Needs Assessment Team Activities

A key step in planning for an Environmental Health Tracking Network in California is identifying and prioritizing needs, issues, and concerns among key stakeholders including: non-governmental organizations, local health and environmental health agencies. To that end, the Needs Assessment Team, a workgroup of the CEHTP Planning Consortium (see previous article) was convened to assist in the development and implementation of a needs assessment activities.

Objectives of the needs assessment include identifying needs and issues related to:

- Stakeholders' priority hazards, exposures, and health outcomes for Environmental Health Tracking.
- Training and capacity building.
- Utilizing, accessing, analyzing, and collecting data.
- Communicating environmental health information.

Phase 1 of the statewide needs assessment – survey questionnaires of NGOs, local health agencies, and local environmental health agencies – has been completed. This component of the needs assessment yielded valuable information that will be used to inform the development of outreach and training strategies and to facilitate the development of a strategic plan for an Environmental Health Tracking Network in California.

Phase 1 also served to identify future partners/collaborators; engage stakeholders; evaluate current communication activities of CEHTP; identify key messages; and generate awareness and interest.

If you have any questions about the CEHTP needs assessment or would like to receive the Phase 1 report when it is available, please contact Eddie Oh at 510-622-4524 or eoh@dhs.ca.gov.

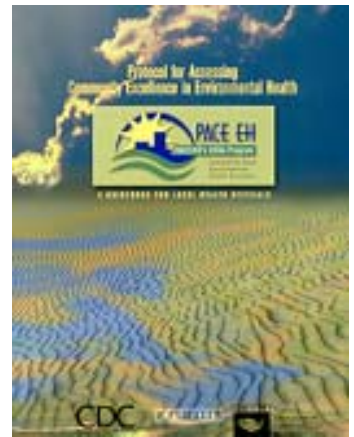
Related Survey/Assessment Findings on Stakeholder Needs, Issues, and Perceptions Regarding Environmental Health :: Secondary Data Sources

Below are a few links to existing information about environmental health issues that may help to inform the CEHTP Needs Assessment Report, our outreach and training activities, and the development of an Environmental Health Tracking Network.

- California Biomonitoring Project Needs Assessment: Report to the Advisory Committee
<http://www.dhs.cahwnet.gov/ehlb/BPP/default.asp?q=default&q2=California%20Biomonitoring%20Planning%20Project,%20CBPP>
- Center for California Health Workforce Studies at the University of California, San Francisco: a Snapshot of California's Local Public Health Departments
http://www.futurehealth.ucsf.edu/pdf_files/snapshot.pdf
- Children's Environmental Health Network: California Project Interim Findings
<http://www.cehn.org/cehn/cafindings.html>
- Health-Track: National Survey of Public Perceptions of Environmental Health Risks, California Component
<http://healthyamericans.org/reports/files/casurvey0717.pdf>
- Marin Cancer Project – Search for the Cause Survey Results, November 2002
http://www.marincancerproject.org/About_Accomplishments.htm#results
- Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR): Information Needs and Uses of the Public Health Workforce, February 18, 2000
<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/wk/mm4906.pdf>
- NACCHO – Information Technology Capacity and Local Public Health Agencies
http://archive.naccho.org/documents/Research_Brief_4.pdf
- NACCHO: Local Public Health Agency Infrastructure- A Chartbook
<http://www.naccho.org/general428.cfm>
- Public Health Foundation: Environmental Health Data Needs – Workshop Results
<http://web.health.gov/environment/DataNeeds/toc.htm>
- Public Health Foundation: Examining Data Sharing Among State Governmental Agencies
<http://www.phf.org/Reports/Data1/datashar.pdf>
- Public Health Foundation: Measuring Health Objectives and Indicators, 1997 State and Local Capacity Survey
<http://www.phf.org/Reports/Chartbook/default.htm#TOC>
- Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) Statewide Survey: Special Survey on Californians and the Environment
<http://www.ppic.org/main/series.asp?i=12>

Resource for Community Assessment and Stakeholder Involvement :: PACE EH Regional Training
[Register Now](#)

The Protocol for Assessing Community Excellence in Environmental Health (PACE EH) tool is a community strategic planning process designed to help local public health agencies and communities work collaboratively to assess and improve local environmental health. The PACE EH regional trainings are designed to help participants gain a better understanding of PACE EH- both the concepts that underpin the model as well as the practical aspects of the process. A special emphasis will be placed on practical applications of PACE EH by presenting lessons learned from actual PACE users. Representatives from local health departments, community partner organizations, and state health departments should register NOW for the training in Washington DC, April 21st-22nd, 2004. For complete registration information visit the PACE EH web site at <http://www.naccho.org/project78.cfm>. For more information, contact Jennifer Li (jli@naccho.org) or Gea Jackson (gjackson@naccho.org) at NACCHO, (202) 783-5550.




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