

President's Task Force on Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks to Children: Children, Emergencies, and Disasters

Purpose

The purpose of the Subcommittee on Children in Emergencies and Disasters (SCED) is to empower federal partners to collectively address gaps in health research and protection of children that arises from their exposure to public health emergencies and disasters. Children are at risk of experiencing these events, and often times, multiple events in quick succession. Such events increase children's exposure to environmental hazards and safety hazards which can worsen existing health issues, cause direct health effects, and disrupt the social systems and infrastructures that help children and families thrive. Protecting children from these risks and decreasing the impact of these events is critical to their well-being and resilience.

The current goals of the subcommittee include:

- Strengthening federal interagency coordination and collaboration
- Building partnerships and public health awareness
- Providing expert consultation and guidance
- Facilitating federal research related to children in emergencies and disasters



Activities

Information Exchange

The SCED serves as a forum for dissemination and exchange of information among federal agencies and to others interested in the Task Force priority areas. Federal staff and other experts are regularly invited to present to the SCED on programs and initiatives of interest.

Interagency Engagement and Consultation

The subcommittee works to provide its combined knowledge and expertise to relevant federal activities.

Examples include:

- The National Integrated Heat Health Information System on implementation of the National Heat Strategy in ways that are protective of children's health and safety.
- The National Advisory Committee on Children in Disasters (NACCD), which provides expert advice to the HHS Secretary, on membership and goals.
- Multi-sector partners of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASSEM) Forum on Medical and Public Health Preparedness for Disasters and Emergencies, and the subsidiary component the Action Collaborative on Disaster Research on ways to protect children before, during and after disaster events.
- Ad-hoc Requests for Input to related federal activities, research endeavors and strategic plans.

Accomplishments

NIHHIS Heat Safety Awareness Social Media Campaign

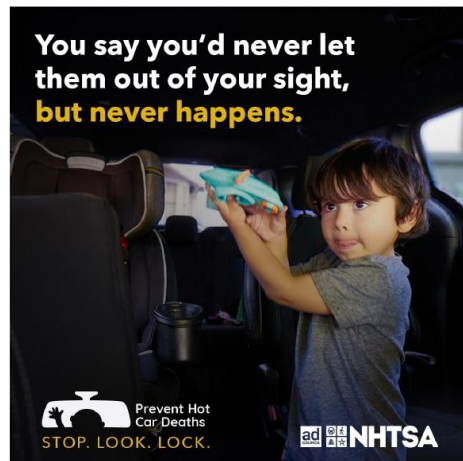
During three weeks of the summer heat season of 2024 (early, mid, and late), the SCED participated in the National Integrated Heat Health Information System's awareness campaign by disseminating federal messages and resources that address ways to protect children of all ages from the effects of extreme heat through the Task Force website and email list.

Examples of resources include:

- [CDC Heat and Health Initiative Clinical Guidance to Protect Children](#)
- [HHS Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program \(LIHEAP\)](#)
- [National Highway and Transportation Safety Administration \(NHTSA\) Campaign to Prevent Child Vehicular Heatstroke](#)

Action Collaborative for Disaster Research Symposia

SCED members collaborated with, helped to coordinate, and participated in two major symposia convened by the Action Collaborative for Disaster Research.



- [Disaster Data Science Symposium](#): This meeting discussed disaster science questions; shared disaster data sources; examined opportunities to increase access and utilization of disaster data sources and streamline interoperability and integration of data for science and improved understanding. April 2024.
- [Symposium on Pediatric Disaster Science](#): This meeting was convened to highlight how research and evidence have the potential to improve outcomes for children at risk of or who have experienced a disaster. August 2022. Recommendations resulting from the symposia were published in NAM Perspectives: [Pediatric Disaster Science: Understanding Needs, Highlighting Imperatives, and Leveraging Opportunities](#) (see Figure below), followed by a larger series of pediatric disaster science.



SOURCE: Dixon, C. A., R. Kwak, L. Ludwig, L. Peek, C. Newton, J. Upperman, J. White, and D. Weiner. 2024. Pediatric disaster science: Understanding needs, highlighting imperatives, and leveraging opportunities. NAM Perspectives. Discussion Paper, National Academy of Medicine, Washington, DC. <https://doi.org/10.31478/202409a>

NOTE: Disaster management cycle: preparedness, response, recovery, and prevention and mitigation. Science and evidence should be sought to envelop, penetrate and drive every aspect of the disaster management cycle with a focus on children.