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

Interagency efforts are vital for coordinating federal government efforts to explore, understand, and act together to improve children's environmental health and safety. The Task Force allows the federal government to leverage the expertise and unique perspectives from across the federal government.

## Children are Uniquely Vulnerable to Environmental Hazards

Children are often uniquely vulnerable to the potential health effects of environmental exposure.

- Children eat more food, drink more fluids, and breathe more air in proportion to their body weight.
- Young children explore their environment by crawling and making frequent hand-to-mouth contact, heightening their risk of encountering harmful exposures.
- Children's brains, lungs, and immune systems are more vulnerable to environmental pollution since they are still developing and growing.

## Objectives of the Task Force

- Identify priority issues of environmental health and safety risks to children that can be best addressed by federal interagency efforts.
- Recommend and implement interagency actions to protect and promote children's environmental health and safety.
- Communicate with federal, state, local, and nongovernmental decisionmakers to protect children from environmental and safety risks.

## Current Subcommittees of the Task Force

- Chemical exposures
- Lead exposures
- Asthma
- Children in emergencies and disasters

## Lead Exposures

Childhood lead exposure has decreased dramatically over the past 30 years. In December 2018, the Task Force released the *Federal Action Plan to Reduce Childhood Lead Exposures and Associated Health Impacts* (Federal Lead Action Plan), which it continues to implement.

The Federal Lead Action Plan outlines how to reduce children's lead exposure through collaboration among federal agencies and with a range of stakeholders, including states, territories, Tribes, and local communities, along with businesses, property owners, and parents.

The Task Force continues work to protect children from lead hazards, including reducing exposure to lead in all media (e.g., dust, soil, drinking water, and air), that may come from various sources (e.g., paint, food, cultural, and consumer products).

## Asthma

Asthma remains one of the most common chronic diseases of children in the United States. Asthma symptoms can be controlled by avoiding or reducing exposure to asthma triggers (including environmental allergens and pollutants) and by following healthcare recommendations.

However, differences in the burden of asthma among children persist with some communities experiencing both high rates of asthma and especially severe disease. Recognizing the challenges these families may face, the subcommittee works to share resources created through interagency collaborations.

The Task Force has been committed to ensuring all children in the U.S., particularly those with asthma, can reach their full potential without limitation from their disease.

## Task Force Members

- Council on Environmental Quality
- Consumer Product Safety Commission
- Council of Economic Advisers
- Council on Environmental Quality
- Department of Agriculture
- Department of Commerce
- Department of Defense
- 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
- Domestic Policy Council
- Environmental Protection Agency
- National Economic Council
- Office of Management and Budget
- Office of Science and Technology Policy

## Chemical Exposures

Children are not just "little adults." Many factors may increase the susceptibility of children to negative health effects from exposure to toxic chemicals.

The chemical exposures subcommittee is enhancing alignment among federal agencies on messaging, activities, and communication related to children's health impacts of chemical exposures. The subcommittee also fosters interagency information sharing, coordination, and collaboration that enhances children's health policy efforts.

## Children in Emergencies and Disasters

Children are at risk of experiencing public health emergency and disaster 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.