

*Wednesday, February 13, 8:00AM-9:30AM
Concurrent Breakout Session E*

Environmental Public Health Tracking and Birth Defects

Moderator: Jane Correia, Florida Department of Health, Tallahassee, FL

An Overview of Environmental Public Health Tracking

Judy Qualters and Nicholas Jones, National Center for Environmental Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, GA

Recommendations of the Environmental Public Health Tracking Birth Defects Content Working Group

Suzanne Gilboa, National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, GA

The Utah Experience

Miland Palmer, Utah Department of Health, Salt Lake City, UT

Public health tracking systems are critical in preventing and controlling disease in populations. Having accurate and timely tracking data enables public health authorities to determine disease impact and trends, recognize clusters and outbreaks, identify populations and geographic areas most affected, and develop and assess the effectiveness of public health policies and interventions.

In 2002 Congress provided the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) with funding to develop a Nationwide Environmental Public Health Tracking (EPHT) Network to facilitate access to information on environmentally related diseases, human exposures, and environmental hazards that can be used to respond to and eventually reduce the burden of environmental diseases. In addition, CDC is to use the funds to develop capacity in environmental health surveillance and risk communication within state and local health departments.

Currently, CDC funds 17 programs (16 state health departments and New York City) to implement statewide EPHT networks that will be part of the National EPHT Network. The core health outcomes, human exposures, and environmental hazards that all programs must track include, but are not limited to, air quality, *birth defects*, drinking water quality, birth outcomes, childhood lead exposure, hospitalization data, cancer, and carbon monoxide poisoning. Content area-specific working groups have been formed to make recommendations to CDC regarding the optimal indicators and measures to monitor and report.

This session will provide the audience with 1) an overview of EPHT and its current status, particularly as it relates to birth defects, 2) recommendations of the EPHT Birth Defects Content Working Group, and 3) a state birth defects program's experience working collaboratively with its EPHT program.