Community Health Centers on the Frontlines of Environmental Health

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Disclosure

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Agenda

• Define Environmental Health & Health Centers’ Role
• Activity
• Climate Change & Human Health
• Community Health Center Case Studies
• Activity
America’s Voice for Community Health Care

The National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC) was founded in 1971 to promote efficient, high quality, comprehensive health care that is accessible, culturally and linguistically competent, community directed, and patient centered for all.
WHAT IS ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH?

“Clean air, stable climate, adequate water, sanitation and hygiene, safe use of chemicals, protection from radiation, healthy and safe workplaces, sound agricultural practices, health-supportive cities and built environments, and a preserved nature are all prerequisites for good health”

World Health Organization
Health Center Program Statute: Section 330 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. §254b) subsection (b)(2)

“Authorizes health centers to provide additional services necessary for the adequate support of primary health services including environmental health services, including- (I) the detection and alleviation of unhealthful conditions associated with (I) water supply; (II) chemical and pesticide exposures; (III) air quality.”
POLL

Is your Network, Health Center or clinic currently addressing environmental health issues?

If so, in what ways?

- Extreme weather or heat
- Energy efficiency/renewable energy
- Community gardening/Food gleaning or recovery
- Air quality testing
- Well water testing
- Pesticide exposure testing or treatment
- Lead levels testing or treatment
- Asthma prevention
- Housing
- Vector control/surveillance
- Telehealth/telemedicine
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CLIMATE, WEATHER & OUR HEALTH
Impact of Climate Change on Human Health

- Injuries, fatalities, mental health impacts
- Asthma, cardiovascular disease
- Heat-related illness and death, cardiovascular failure
- Malaria, dengue, encephalitis, hantavirus, Rift Valley fever, Lyme disease, chikungunya, West Nile virus
- Forced migration, civil conflict, mental health impacts
- Respiratory allergies, asthma
- Extreme heat
- Air pollution
- Environmen-mental Degradation
- Increasing Allergens
- Severe Weather
- Changes in Vector Ecology
- Sealevels
- Rising
- More Extreme Weather
- Rising
- Sealevels
- Water and Food Supply Impacts
- Water Quality Impacts
- Malnutrition, diarrheal disease
- Cholera, cryptosporidiosis, campylobacter, leptospirosis, harmful algal blooms
POLLUTION > TEMPERATURE > DISASTER
This map denotes the approximate location for each of the 20 separate billion-dollar weather and climate disasters that impacted the United States in 2021.
HEAT RELATED DEATHS & ILLNESS

• Difficulty breathing, kidney failure, and adverse pregnancy outcomes
• Humidity can impact the body’s natural cooling mechanism - sweat

By the end of the century, heat-related deaths are projected to increase on the order of thousands to tens-of-thousands each year in the U.S.

OUTDOOR WORK: HEALTH RISKS

• Labor capacity declines with heat
• Outdoor workers at high risk from heat-related illness
• Southern U.S. states lost 15-20% of daylight working hours for heavy labor (e.g., agriculture and construction) in July 2018 alone

64.7 million potential labor hours were lost in 2018 from extreme heat

CLIMATE CHANGE HARMs SOME MORE THAN OTHERS
MORE AMERICANS ARE CONCERNED THAN YOU MAY THINK
HEALTH IS A MAJOR MOTIVATOR

The majority of Americans support climate change solutions that protect health
Survey question: “Would you support climate solutions if they benefited any of the following? (Please select all that apply).” 1,029 national respondents. +/- 3% margin of error.

- Protecting personal and public health: 76%
- Increasing good paying jobs in the US: 71%
- Strengthening resilience in our communities: 53%
- Advancing justice and equity: 48%
- None of the above: 12%

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Primary care physicians are one of the most trusted sources for information about climate change and environmental health (Six America’s study, 2014)
Environmental Health and Climate Change Initiatives at Health Centers and NACHC
LA MAESTRA
SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

• LEED Certified Gold building
• Number of environmental health initiatives (lead testing, composting, community gardening, housing services navigation)
• Asthma remediation – home visiting and trigger mitigation for low-income children and adults
SUN RIVER

NEW YORK

• Have position of VP of Sustainability and Planning
• In process of creating sustainability plan, which addresses:
  • Building sustainability literacy
  • Focus on eco-system vitality
  • Mitigating and adapting to climate change
  • Resilient and sustainable infrastructure
John Bartkowski Department of Environmental Health

• Revitalizing and restoring the Kinnickinnic River and surrounding neighborhoods

• Preventing childhood lead poisoning and removing lead paint from houses, testing for lead in soil of home gardens

• Providing interactive environmental education to elementary school students

• Supporting the Milwaukee Community Schools Partnership to align resources that meet public school needs
PROJECT VIDA

EL PASO, TEXAS

LEED Platinum certification
• Vegetated roof
• Gray water harvesting
• Photo-voltaic panel system
HAMILTON COMMUNITY HEALTH NETWORK
FLINT, CLIO, & LAPEER, MICHIGAN

Addressing the Flint water crisis
- Lead exposure
UMMA COMMUNITY CLINIC
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

- Free food fair - Fresh produce to under-resourced community
  - Food recovery
  - Gardening/greenhouse
  - Composting

Addressing urban oil drilling
- Worked with local organizations to advocate
- Attended city council meetings
- Educated care teams and staff
- Environmental Text Campaigns
- Patient screening, acknowledgement, connecting to resources
CRESCENTCARE

New Orleans, Louisiana

- In the aftermath of Hurricane Ida last August, 19 New Orleans residents died from excessive heat, lack of oxygen or carbon monoxide poisoning
- Community Light House Initiative- all people in NOLA will be within 15 minutes walk to location with solar panels and back-up power systems
NACHC INITIATIVES

Extreme Heat

Resilient Infrastructure

Food Security
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NACHC Climate Change Interest Group

For questions/more information, email Jessica Hinshaw at jhinshaw@nachc.org
Discussion

Tell us more about the ongoing environmental health or climate change work going on at your PCA, HCCNs, health centers, and clinics

1. Who? (health centers, clinics, PCA, or HCCN level)
2. What and How? (i.e., funding, tools, partners)
3. Key Challenges?
QUESTIONS?
THANK YOU!

PLEASE VISIT US ONLINE nachc.org