



CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES

Prevention and Environmental Health

Prevention has many aspects. One of these is safeguarding environmental health for all people and particularly for those with intellectual and developmental disabilities. People with intellectual and developmental disabilities have the right to live, work, learn, worship and play in environments that are healthy and safe.

Issue

Environmental health can be defined as "freedom from illness or injury related to exposure to toxic agents and other environmental conditions that are potentially detrimental to human health" ¹. Environmental exposures play a key role in human growth and development, maintenance of health and in the development of disability and disease ^{2,3}. The health impacts of contaminated homes, work places and communities pose a greater risk for the developing fetus, children, and people who already have compromising health issues and are faced with health disparities greater than the general population because they are uniquely vulnerable. This includes those living with an intellectual or developmental disability. Advocacy around environmental health involves working to reduce the environmental hazards that contribute to intellectual and developmental disabilities, and to minimize further risks to health for people living with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Position

Numerous pollutants in the environment including contaminants such as lead, mercury, pesticides, carbon monoxide, radon, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), brominated flame retardants and solvents, can affect brain development and function and contribute to adverse health outcomes and health disparities.

Environmental Policy current Events

- Attached is a scientific article which explores the neurodevelopmental impacts of prenatal exposure to polybrominated diphenol ethers (PBDEs), which are widely used flame retardant compounds existing in textiles, building materials and electronic equipment. The PBDEs in this study were emitted from the World Trade Center after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack. The authors, researchers at Columbia University and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), measured the compounds in umbilical cord blood and tracked indicators of neurodevelopment at 12-48 months and at 72 months of age. After adjustment for potential confounders, children with higher concentrations of BDEs scored lower on tests of mental and physical development at 12–48 and 72 months.

- Congressmen Bobby Rush (D-IL) and Henry Waxman (D-CA) introduced a groundbreaking bill on July 22 to reform U.S. chemicals policy. The "Toxic Chemicals Safety Act of 2010" is intended to overhaul the 1976 Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA), which has failed to regulate chemicals in consumer products – even those that have known links to cancer, learning disabilities, asthma, reproductive disorders, and other serious health problems. The 162 page bill is attached as HR5820. A hearing on the bill which was attended by AAIDD staff was held on July 29. The following witnesses testified on the bill: Steve Owens, Assistant Administrator, Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention, Environmental Protection Agency; Richard Denison, Ph.D., Senior Scientist, Environmental Defense Fund ; Calvin M. Dooley, President and Chief Executive Officer, American Chemistry Council ;Howard Williams, Vice President, Construction Specialties, Inc.; Mark Mitchell, M.D., M.P.H., President, Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice; Beth Bosley, Society of Chemical Manufacturers and Affiliates, Inc.; and Ken Cook, President, Environmental Working Group . To listen to the hearing or obtain copies of submitted documents, visit http://energycommerce.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2095:hearing-on-hr-5820-the-toxic-chemicals-safety-act-of-2010&catid=129:subcommittee-on-commerce-trade-and-consumer-protection&Itemid=70

AAIDD's EHI policy staff attended the August 3 hearing on the "State of Research on Potential Environmental Health Factors with Autism and Related Neurodevelopmental Disorders" before the Subcommittee on Children's Health of the Environmental and Public Works. The Committee wanted to understand the state of neurodevelopmental research on the causes and treatment of autism and other neurodevelopmental conditions and particularly wanted to understand the relationship of environmental and genetic factors. To learn more about the hearing, visit http://epw.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=Hearings.Hearing&Hearing_ID=1ab3cf42-802a-23ad-4a3a-686da83bf6d0