

**Report 89:** Can NIEHS Support and Foster State and Local Environmental Health Infrastructure?

**Convener:** Lisa Conti, Aubrey Miller, Kathleen Gray

**Brief History:** Historically there has not been connectivity between states and NIEHS on environmental health issues and ongoing research. CDC has been a traditional partner for state and local programs, but there is a lack of ongoing coordination and awareness between CDC and NIEHS on environmental health concerns. Current challenges for state and local health programs require collaboration to meet environmental health needs.

**Discussion Highlights:** The group discussed existing partnerships, both NIEHS-led and CDC-led, and discussed ways that successful efforts in of other agencies could be adapted by NIEHS. The recent NIEHS-led outreach around the Gulf oil spill demonstrated the opportunities for and value of such collaboration and that NIEHS is positioned to lead such efforts/partnerships.

**Recommendations:**

1. NIEHS should designate a liaison/office to partner with state health agencies. This person could participate in monthly state environmental health directors' calls.
2. NIEHS should convene an exploratory working group to develop strategic goals of partnerships. Also need to convene an inter-agency group to facilitate communication about existing efforts and potential to leverage.
3. NIEHS should compile information on NIEHS activities in each state and share it with the states. Also require that health directors are notified of RFAs that could support collaboration with their agencies.
4. Include state and local health departments in Town Hall Forums in addition to current community-based organizations. Successful examples of this approach include Wisconsin and New Orleans sessions.
5. CBPR should engage state and local health programs (by definition).
6. Survey states to learn about needs and best ways to connect with their environmental health efforts. Have a process for facilitation of dialogue and responsive action.
7. Would like NIEHS to consider supporting additional training/fellowships/direct assistance with respect to environmental health. These efforts should be bi-directional (state staff coming to agencies and agency staff going to states). Would like to see co-sponsorship of Environmental Public Health Leadership Institute by NIEHS.

**Discussion Participants:** Janice Allen, Bruce Androphy, Chip Hughes, Kimberly Thigpen-Tart, Heather Henry, Peggy Shepard, Tom Sinks, Trisha Castranio