

Healthy Children Organizing Project

A project of Consumer Action. Formerly the Lead Poisoning Prevention Project.

Environmental Hazards and Our Children

Young children are extremely vulnerable to the harmful effects of environmental hazards. This special vulnerability drives HCOP efforts to prevent children's exposures to these hazards. They can affect children's growth, behavior and development for a life-time.

Special Vulnerabilities

Young children are especially vulnerable for a number of reasons, beginning with inevitable exposures to toxins in their mothers' wombs and from breast milk. Their bodies are not fully developed, unlike adults bodies that have mechanisms to help defend against some exposures. They are exposed to higher amounts of contaminants compared to adults because they take in more food, water and air relative to their body size. They engage in behaviors that put them at greater risk, such as putting their hands and toys in their mouth and playing on indoor floors and in outdoor soil.

New Research

New research emphasizes the reason why HCOP needs to continue its efforts to prevent children's exposure to environmental toxins. Take lead poisoning as an example. A recent study reveals that children's IQ can be significantly lowered by blood lead levels that the Cen-



It All Starts with Healthy Housing

HCOP wants all children, especially low income children, to have a chance to develop, grow, and learn in healthy environments starting with their homes. Our main strategies to reach this goal are: [1] educating parents about how they can protect children from environmental hazards in their homes through health providers and family and children service providers based in their communities; and, [2] advocating for property owners to maintain healthy housing for tenants. We implement these strategies through a number of different projects.

Public Housing Mold & Asthma Working Group

HCOP is helping improve the health of people living in public housing directly managed by the SF Housing Authority. HCOP obtained commitments from the Department of Building Inspection (DBI) and the Department of Public Health (DPH) to work with the Housing Authority on mold and asthma problems, and then convinced the Housing Authority staff to meet with representatives from those agencies, as well as community-based organizations serving public housing tenants. HCOP facilitates the group's work in an effort to provide the Authority with the input and assistance necessary for it to solve the mold problems in older housing units

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Director's Column

HCOP changed its name from the Lead Poisoning Prevention Project over five years ago because we knew that children were being exposed to other toxins, in addition to lead, that significantly affect their health. It doesn't make much sense to protect children from one threat and ignore their exposure to a number of other hazards.

We expanded our efforts to include protecting young children from environmental asthma triggers, as well as from exposures to thousands of disease-causing chemicals in their homes, schools and other environments. Many of these efforts are briefly described in the accompanying articles and the graphic illustrating our programs and our citywide effort to mobilize everyone who can help make our environment safer for children.

All of these programs present us with many challenges that we gladly take on as best we can. However, the biggest challenge we face right now is sustaining HCOP. Funding is difficult for every non-profit and we are no exception. If you think that our work deserves support, please donate and help us in any other way you can to raise funds. Tell others about HCOP and what we do. Send us the names of people you think might want to help. Anything you can do will be greatly appreciated.

Healthy Children = Healthy Families =
Healthy Communities

—Neil Gendel



Healthy Schools = Healthy Children

HCOP wants a healthy environment in San Francisco's public schools for children and staff. Unfortunately, many of the schools are in substandard condition and contain numerous environmental hazards. Asthma is believed to be the number one reason for school absences, and poor indoor air quality contributes to asthma attacks. Older school buildings are literally painted with lead. Chemicals commonly used in schools are known to cause headaches, nausea, trigger asthma attacks, and can even damage vital organs and brain development. We are especially concerned about the 2,000 low-income 3 1/2 to 4 year olds in the District's child development program because they are the most vulnerable to the environmental hazards in the schools.

The District is trying to upgrade the condition of 30 schools by asking the voters to approve \$295,000,000 in bond funds to renovate them. We're supporting the bond proposal and advocating that the District use "high performance" designs to renovate those schools. Studies have shown that students and teachers perform better in schools using these designs. Among the many benefits, these designs promote good indoor air quality and the use of the least toxic building materials available.

While renovating some of the schools is a good first step, we are very concerned about the environmental hazards in all of the schools. With the help of the city's Asthma Task Force, in which HCOP participates, we are asking the District to fully implement its existing environmental health policies. These policies require the District to implement integrated pest management, indoor air quality and lead poisoning prevention plans for every school in the District. They were enacted by the Board of Education five years ago at the request of HCOP and many others. Some progress has been made, but much more needs to be done.

Public participation in this effort is crucial. We educate parents, teachers, students, policy makers, and other community-based groups about protecting children from environmental hazards in the schools. Children in San Francisco need schools that are free of lead, mold, and other toxins. HCOP's project will help make a difference by institutionalizing the concept of "healthy buildings" in the District's policies and procedures so future generations of children can learn and develop to their full potential.

ters for Disease Control (CDC) currently regards as safe—9 micrograms per deciliter. According to the CDC, 1 in every 10 children between the ages of 1 to 5 have blood lead levels equal to or above 5 micrograms per deciliter, a level at which the new study suggests children's IQs are affected.

According to the EPA's recent report, *America's Children and the Environment*, lead continues to be one of the worst environmental hazards facing children. Studies show that childhood exposure to lead can contribute to attention-deficit and hyperactivity disorders, limited reading and learning capacity, higher school drop out rates, aggressiveness and delinquent behavior. Recent research also emphasizes that lead can have an impact throughout a lifetime. Mothers exposed to lead when they were young may expose their children to lead. Lead has been linked with spontaneous abortions, low baby birth weight, dental caries, shorter life spans, osteoporosis and even cancer.

Many other chemicals and heavy metals harm children. The EPA study focused on young children's "body burden" by testing their blood for a number of different toxins known to cause harm.

One in every 10 children have blood lead levels at or above 5 micrograms per deciliter, a level at which the new study suggests children's IQs are affected.

Unfortunately, the EPA reports that even young children have significant body burdens of environmental toxins. Numerous studies indicate that these toxins are linked or may be linked to a wide variety of illnesses, including asthma, autism, attention deficit and behavioral disorders, cancer and much more.

The Precautionary Principle— Better Safe than Sorry

San Francisco is at the forefront of the movement across the country to adopt the Precautionary Principle. The basic premise of the Precautionary Principle is that when an activity raises threats of harm to human health or the environment, precautionary measures should be taken even if some cause and effect relationships are not fully established scientifically. The European Union is in the process of adopting the Precautionary Principle. The Bay Area Working Group for the Precautionary Principle is leading the effort to implement the Principle in San Francisco, and HCOP has joined that Group. Currently, it is working on enacting legislation requiring that city agencies purchase non-toxic or the least toxic product available at a reasonable price. HCOP is considering similar measures for the School District and the Housing Authority. In addition, we are working to help parents learn how to exercise the Precautionary Principle in their own homes and significantly reduce the toxins to which they and their children are exposed.

We cannot stop manufacturers from making products that are harmful to children, adults and the environment, at least not yet. But we can reduce the demand for these products as governments, businesses and consumers search for healthier alternatives. Now is the time to join in this effort for the sake of our children and ourselves.



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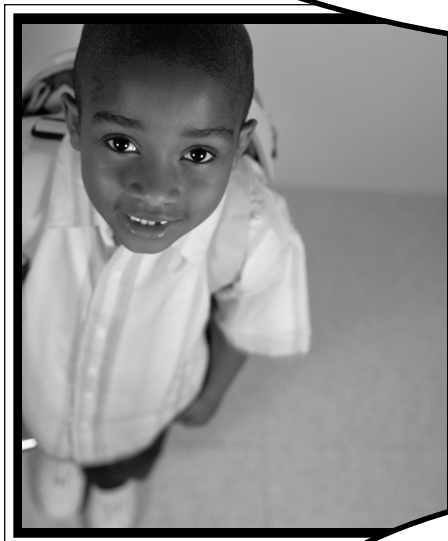
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Healthy Children Organizing Project's Model for Success

Policy Advisory Committees

HCOP works with these groups on environmental health:

- Lead Poisoning Prevention CAC
- Lead Hazard Reduction CAC
- Early Childhood Interagency Council
 - Asthma Task Force
- Child Care Policy Advisory Council
- Healthy Homes for Healthy Children Working Group



Healthy Children Organizing Project

Policy Implementation

HCOP protects children from environmental hazards through policy implementation:

- Lead Poisoning Prevention Ordinance
- Exterior Safe-Work Practices Ordinance
 - SFUSD Indoor Air Quality Policy
 - SFUSD Lead Safe Policy



Working with City Agencies

HCOP encourages the following agencies to protect children from environmental hazards:

- Department of Public Health
- Department of Human Services
- Department of Building Inspection
- Department of Children, Youth & Families
 - SF School District
 - SF Housing Authority
- Recreation and Parks Department
 - Libraries

Community Involvement

HCOP's works in these low-income neighborhoods:

- Bayview Hunter's Point
- Bernal Heights
- Chinatown
 - Mission
- Portrero Hill
- Tenderloin

Research

HCOP links new research on environmental health with parents, policy makers, and other nonprofits through participation with:

- Physicians for Social Responsibility
- Bay Area Working Group—Precautionary Principle
 - Collaborative on Health & Environment
- Institute for Children's Health & the Environment

through inspection procedures, prompt and effective responses to tenant complaints, and tenant education about maintaining mold-free homes.

Healthy Families in Healthy Homes [HFHH]

HCOP recently initiated efforts with a coalition of city agencies and non-government health providers to educate low-income parents about environmental hazards in their homes. The HFHH includes representatives from HCOP, the two health plans which serve MediCal clients (Blue Cross and the San Francisco Health Plan), two DPH programs serving low income children (Child Health and Disability Prevention, Children's Environmental Health Promotion), the Housing Authority, the Health and Environmental Resource Center located

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in Bayview-Hunter's Point, Head Start and the Department of Human Services. It's work has already started with a coordinated effort to test more children for lead poisoning. HFHH's work will also help with the parent education efforts of the Public Housing Working Group described above.

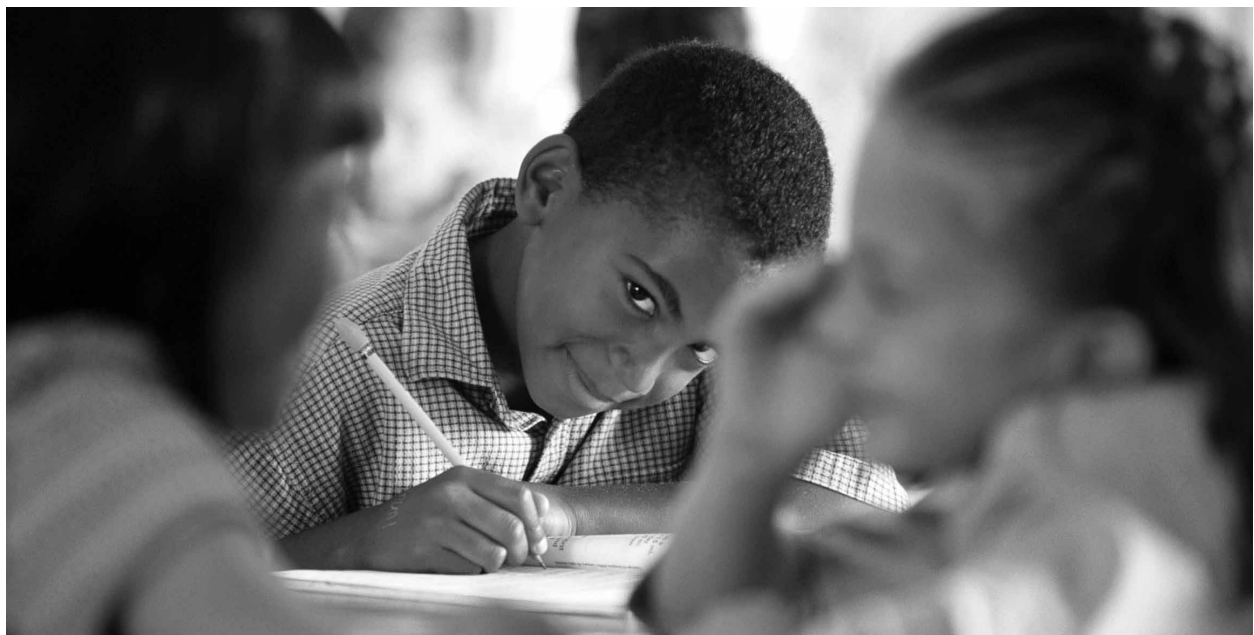
Home Visiting

Home visits by public health nurses and community health workers provide an opportunity to educate parents about environmental hazards in their homes and to help them eliminate those hazards. With this in mind, we are participating in an advisory group on the development of a universal home visiting program for all new parents in San Francisco. We're advocating that environmental health education and home assessments be included in this program. In addition, DPH operates several other kinds of home visiting programs. At HCOP's request, the Department has agreed to consider including environmental health education in those other programs as well. HCOP participates in the Department's review of those programs to determine which ones would be appropriate to include educating parents about environmental hazards in their homes.

Family Support Strategic Plan

HCOP is a member of the Early Childhood Interagency Council (ECIC), whose members include representatives of city agencies and community-based providers serving families and young children in San Francisco. The ECIC recently created a comprehensive citywide strategic plan for strengthening family support services. HCOP successfully promoted the inclusion of "healthy homes" in the ECIC's vision of ideal family support services. The ECIC has revised its charter to become the Family Support Council [FSC], and HCOP continues as a member of the

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new Council to help families protect their children from environmental hazards through the implementation of the newly adopted family support strategic plan.

Healthy Homes Legislation—The Lead Hazard Reduction Citizens Advisory Committee

HCOP always knew that parent education wasn't enough to make homes healthy for children. In 1992 it requested that the Board of Supervisors form a citywide citizens advisory committee to recommend legislation to make private housing lead-safe for children. HCOP's director has chaired and facilitated the committee's efforts from inception. The committee includes representatives from all the stakeholders who need to be involved in solving the problem—property

owners, tenants, contractors, DBI and more. Much of the committee's success is attributable to the work of the DPH Children's Environmental Health Program. The committee has recommended several pieces of significant "healthy housing" legislation that have been enacted by the city, including requiring the use of lead-safe work practices on the exteriors of older buildings—almost all buildings in the city. That legislation is working. Now the Committee is drafting legislation requiring the use of lead-safe interior work practices. Because of HCOP's efforts, with help from many others, San Francisco is a leader in making its homes lead-safe for children.

Environmentally-safe, healthy homes greatly improve the opportunity for low-income children to be healthy and develop to the full extent of their given abilities. HCOP is engaging in all means possible to help make that happen.

**Healthy Homes = Healthy Children = Healthy Families =
Healthy Communities**

Thank you past and present funders!

HCOP thanks the following foundations and corporations for their support over the course of the past three years.

California Wellness Foundation
Home Depot
Van LobenSels/RembeRock Foundation
Providian Foundation
Miriam & Peter Haas Fund
Richard & Rhoda Goldman Foundation
California Endowment
PacifiCare Foundation
Gellert Foundation
Individual Donors

We Need Your Help!

HCOP has created a nationally recognized model for organizing effective efforts to protect children's health, but all this work comes at a price—the time and effort needed to raise funds to sustain our work. Please help. We need your support to carry this effort forward. Every dollar counts! Any help you can provide will be greatly appreciated.

Yes!! want to protect children from environmental hazards!

Please find enclosed my gift of:

\$35 _____ \$50 _____ \$100 _____ \$250 _____ Other: \$ _____

Contributions are tax deductible. Make your check payable to "HCOP".

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____



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