

# Community Action Plan Template for Children's Environmental Health

## Environmental Justice

### Introduction

This template is intended to help jurisdictions navigate the community action planning process by providing a set of sample strategic objectives, actions, and evaluation metrics to plan program activities to address key children's environmental health issues in communities. It has been designed for state and territorial health agencies (S/THAs) to support their strategic planning processes and for integrating children's environmental health into state health improvement plans. S/THAs can also share the template widely within their jurisdictions and with communities directly by providing consultation on activities and metrics related to children's health and broader public health. S/THAs may also use the template when engaging with local health departments or other local partners to use when helping a community develop a short and/or long-term strategic plan for addressing children's environmental health threats.

### Format

Outlined below are a series of suggested objectives, strategies, and activities that jurisdictions may consider as they develop their own action plans. Additionally, each activity has space to write in an evaluation metric and a time frame associated with that activity. Some suggested metrics and time frames are included in the templates, but some are also left intentionally blank so the end user can fully customize the metrics. These metrics can be used to measure progress and determine the level of success or efficacy of a given activity. Some of the activities target children's environmental health specifically, while others address broader environmental health hazards that impact children indirectly.

Jurisdictions are encouraged to develop their own metrics in accordance with their desired measures (process vs. outcomes) and their corresponding timelines. Metrics should also be SMARTIE (Strategic, Measurable, Ambitious, Realistic, Time-bound, Inclusive, and Equitable). When developing metrics, consider short term (one to 12 months) and longer term (one to five years) as a general time frame, but prioritize those that can be achieved in the near term first to get the planning off the ground and running. Time frames should include days, months, and years (e.g., over the next year, from [start date] to [end date], such as July 31, 2028 – July 31, 2029). For example, final metrics should look like "By July 31, 2030, achieve a minimum of 100 participants across all workshops".

## Topic: Environmental Justice

**BACKGROUND:** Regardless of socioeconomic status or geographic location, all children should have access to healthy environments where they can safely live, learn, and play. Environmental justice is a critical issue that directly impacts the health and well-being of individuals and communities. Exposure to environmental hazards such as air and water pollution, toxic chemicals, and hazardous waste can lead to a range of adverse health outcomes. Children are more vulnerable to the effects of environmental hazards, therefore exposure during critical periods of development can lead to lifelong health impacts, such as cognitive and behavioral problems, developmental delays, and respiratory issues.

Addressing environmental injustice requires a holistic and intersectional approach that considers social determinants of health—such as poverty, racism, and discrimination—and works to promote equitable access to clean and safe environments. It is essential to prioritize the protection of children's health in efforts to address environmental injustice, by promoting clean and safe environments, providing access to healthy food and physical activity, and empowering communities to participate in decision-making processes that affect their health and well-being.

**GOALS:**

- Reduce exposure to chemical contaminants in underserved communities.
- Provide communities impacted by harmful environmental exposure with educational resources to help address environmental justice concerns.
- Include leadership from communities with environmental justice concerns in local decision-making bodies.

**PARTNERS:**

- Community leaders
- Faith-based organizations
- Neighborhood and civic associations
- Local health departments
- Public health information officers
- State Department of Environmental Protection, Department of Environmental Quality
- Federal partners at CDC, EPA, and Housing and Urban Development
- Environmental law groups, representatives

**Hazardous Waste and Toxic Chemicals**

Communities with environmental justice concerns often bear a disproportionate burden of toxic exposures due to proximity to hazardous waste facilities and industrial sites. Prioritizing proper cleanup and disposal of toxic substances can help to reduce children's risk of chemical exposures and mitigate adverse health outcomes such as respiratory issues, developmental delays, and even cancer. Children, along with other vulnerable populations, can benefit from coordinated and transparent hazardous waste cleanup efforts.

**Objective 1:** Reduce exposure to hazardous waste and toxic chemicals in low-income and minority communities.

*Activities with Direct Benefits to Children*

Strategy A	<i>Prioritize cleanup of contaminated sites in affected communities.</i>
Activity 1	<p><u>Activity:</u> Create a public information campaign to raise awareness about cleanup needs and support advocacy efforts.</p> <p><u>Evaluation Metric:</u> Increased number of elected public officials briefed about prioritizing cleanup of contaminated sites in a community by [n]%.  <u>Evaluation Time Frame:</u> Over one year, from [start date] to [end date].</p>
Activity 2	<p><u>Activity:</u> Conduct community environmental health needs assessments to prioritize sites for cleanup based on health risks (these assessments can also be embedded into a broader community health needs assessment).</p> <p><u>Evaluation Metric:</u> Complete assessments for [n]% of identified priority sites.  <u>Evaluation Time Frame:</u> Over two years, from [start date] to [end date].</p>
Strategy B	<i>Ensure that cleanup efforts are transparent and involve community input and participation.</i>
Activity 1	<p><u>Activity:</u> Host town hall meetings and public hearings to inform community members about the status of cleanup efforts.</p> <p><u>Evaluation Metric:</u> Achieve an average attendance of 100 community members per meeting.  <u>Evaluation Time Frame:</u> Over 12 months, from [start date] to [end date].</p>
Activity 2	<p><u>Activity:</u> Create an online portal or bulletin that provides regular updates on cleanup activities and allows community members to share input.</p> <p><u>Evaluation Metric:</u> Increase monthly engagement with the online portal by [n]%.  <u>Evaluation Time Frame:</u> Over three years, from [start date] to [end date].</p>

Strategy C	<i>Provide resources and incentives to businesses and households to reduce use of toxic chemicals and waste.</i>
Activity 1	<p><u>Activity</u>: Provide workshops for families and small business owners interested in improving sustainability and reducing use of toxic chemicals.</p> <p><u>Evaluation Metric</u>: Achieve a minimum of [n] participants across all workshops.</p> <p><u>Evaluation Time Frame</u>: Over one year, from [start date] to [end date].</p>
<i>Activities with Indirect Benefits to Children</i>	
Activity 2	<p><u>Activity</u>: Create a certification program for businesses that adopt sustainable practices.</p> <p><u>Evaluation Metric</u>: Obtain certifications from at least [n] businesses.</p> <p><u>Evaluation Time Frame</u>: Over two years, from [start date] to [end date].</p>
<p><b>Education and Outreach</b></p> <p>Providing accessible and culturally sensitive information about environmental health risks can equip communities with the knowledge and resources to advocate for healthier environments for children. Education and outreach efforts should prioritize communities disproportionately affected by harmful environmental exposures. These efforts should promote awareness of preventative measures and provide linkages to resources that pave the way for collective action toward environmental justice and the protection of children's health.</p>	
<p><b>Objective 2:</b> Ensure that communities have access to information and resources to address environmental justice concerns.</p>	
<i>Activities with Direct Benefits to Children</i>	
Strategy A	<i>Develop community outreach programs that provide education about environmental hazards and ways to reduce exposure.</i>
Activity 1	<p><u>Activity</u>: Develop targeted educational materials for different audiences in communities, e.g., fact sheets, brochures, videos.</p> <p><u>Evaluation Metric</u>: Produce a minimum of [n] unique educational materials.</p> <p><u>Evaluation Time Frame</u>: Over one year, from [start date] to [end date].</p>

<p><b>Activity 2</b></p>	<p><i>Activity:</i> Establish a task force with faith-based and community organizations to conduct outreach and host educational events about environmental justice.</p> <p><i>Evaluation Metric:</i> Engage at least [n] community partners in outreach activities.</p> <p><i>Evaluation Time Frame:</i> Over one year, from [start date] to [end date].</p>
<p><i>Activities with Indirect Benefits to Children</i></p>	
<p><b>Strategy B</b></p>	<p><i>Provide resources and support to community-based organizations working on environmental justice issues.</i></p>
<p><b>Activity 1</b></p>	<p><i>Activity:</i> Create linkages to pro-bono services and technical assistance opportunities for community-based organizations.</p> <p><i>Evaluation Metric:</i> Increase the number of available service providers by [n]%. <i>Evaluation Time Frame:</i> Over two years, from [start date] to [end date].</p>
<p><b>Activity 2</b></p>	<p><i>Activity:</i> Establish a mini-grant program that prioritizes funding for community-based organizations led by people of color.</p> <p><i>Evaluation Metric:</i> Disburse grants to a minimum of [n] community organizations. <i>Evaluation Time Frame:</i> Over two years, from [start date] to [end date].</p>
<p><b>Community-Led Decision-Making</b></p> <p>Centering community voices and perspectives in decision-making processes is fundamental to advancing environmental justice and safeguarding children's health. Encouraging collaboration with partners from different sectors and building leadership capacity for community members can support involvement in decision-making for environmental health policies. Policy decisions related to land use, resource allocation, and environmental regulations may directly and indirectly impact children's health.</p>	

**Objective 3:** Promote inclusion and leadership of underrepresented communities in decision-making around environmental issues.

*Activities with Direct Benefits to Children*

**Strategy A** *Prioritize participation of affected communities in decision-making around permitting and land-use decisions.*

**Activity 1**

Activity: Conduct community-led environmental justice assessments to understand opportunities for addressing local environmental justice concerns.

Evaluation Metric: Conduct [n] environmental justice assessments for all identified areas of concern.

Evaluation Time Frame: Over two years, from [start date] to [end date].

*Activities with Indirect Benefits to Children*

**Activity 2**

Activity: Establish a health in all policies program that engages community groups interested in collaborative policy decision-making.

Evaluation Metric: Engage at least [n] community groups in policy decisions.

Evaluation Time Frame: Over one year, from [start date] to [end date].

**Strategy B**

*Provide training and resources to community members to support their effective participation in decision-making processes.*

**Activity 1**

Activity: Translate educational materials and official documents into multiple languages to promote accessibility among community members.

Evaluation Metric: Translate a minimum of [n] documents into target languages.

Evaluation Time Frame: Over one year, from [start date] to [end date].

**Activity 2**

Activity: Create leadership training program for community members to build capacity in environmental policy advocacy and public speaking.

Evaluation Metric: Have [n] community members complete the leadership program.

Evaluation Time Frame: Over two years, from [start date] to [end date].