

Advisory Committee Members Present:

Millie Piazza, Chair	Lauren Jenks
Steve Whitaker (for Stella Chao)	Alice Park
BJ Cummings	Sheela Sathyanarayana (phone)
Richard Gelb (phone)	Tyrus Smith (phone)
Steven Gilbert	Sharyne Shiu Thornton
Linn Gould	Velma Veloria
Candy Jackson (phone)	

Guests:

Andy Chen

Staff:

Christy Hoff	Ned Therien
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Action Items:

- Christy will follow up with Linn Gould to obtain information on EJ Analysis to send out to committee members.
- Christy will follow up with Linn Gould to obtain a new article from the American Journal of Public Health on community capacity building and send out to the group.

1. Welcome and Introductions:

- Millie Piazza welcomed committee members and facilitated introductions.
- Steven Gilbert shared information about the Children's Environmental Health Forum.
- Millie reviewed the agenda for the day.

2. EJ Policy Review Student Project:

- Millie introduced Andy Chen, a second year Seattle-University law student. Andy is working on an Environmental Justice project as an intern for the Duwamish River Cleanup Coalition; BJ Cummings is his project supervisor. The project period is two weeks.
- Andy provided two project options: (1) to identify Washington state laws that provide authority for various points of entry to work on environmental justice issues; and (2) to review EJ laws and policies in other states, and assess what is working well.
- Members weighed in on pros and cons of each option and the desire to address both. In the end, members agreed that option 2 felt like a precursor to option 1.
- The group reached agreement to have Andy work on an assessment of policies in other states, which may require contacting other states to learn what is working well.
- Members suggested asking the South Seattle Interagency EJ Working Group to conduct the review of existing rules/statutes for points of entry.
- Committee members discussed the time frame for the Council's recommendations.

3. Exposure Pathways for Maternal and Child Health - Epigenetics and the Life Course Model:

- Linn Gould provided an overview of life course theory as an explanation for why health disparities persist despite ongoing efforts to address them. She said exposures in utero extend through the lifetime and into subsequent generations.
- Steven Gilbert said epigenetics is defined as above and beyond genetics. In epigenetic pathways, DNA is not being expressed as it should and so outcomes are modified. Some changes are inheritable. Changes can be due to stress or result from chemical exposures. He defined epiprecaution as moving above and beyond precaution.
- Sheela Sathyanarayana added that early life exposures can affect the lifespan and future generations. She said the life course theory is a relatively new concept to enter mainstream scientific thinking despite the concepts being around for quite some time.
- Members discussed the importance of racial/ethnic discrimination, which causes stress and subsequent health problems. Members agreed that racial discrimination is an environmental exposure of concern and not beyond the scope for the group.
- Members discussed race/ethnicity as a social construct, not biological.
- Members discussed whether the life course model implied the persistence of disparities and that future generations were doomed to poor health. They talked about the need for preventive action now to improve the health of future generations and that the focus should be on changing the environment, not individual behaviors.
- They discussed the importance of affected communities working together and the need to educate communities, including refugee communities, about the life course model.
- The committee discussed how epigenetics and the life course model could provide a framework for its four focus areas. Some key points from that discussion include:
 - Social justice plays a huge role in health.
 - Statewide EJ policy is needed to acknowledge the role of environmental and social exposures, including discrimination, on health.
 - Strategies to ensure healthy communities are needed to mitigate exposures and poor health outcomes.
 - Chemical reform is needed because environmental chemicals can influence health over the life course and into future generations via epigenetic pathways.
 - Affected communities need data, information, and resources to improve their own health and the health of future generations.

4. EJ Policy Discussion:

- Millie said EJ policy can take many forms, e.g., limiting the number of facilities in an area, setting up a fund to assist EJ communities, creating a task force, etc. She asked committee members to brainstorm what they would like to see in terms of statewide EJ policy. Ideas suggested included:
 - Institutional racism training and /or efforts to improve diversity of agency leadership.
 - Requirements for health impact assessment – EJ analysis.
 - State commitment to EJ (baseline indicators – tracking over time).

5. Chemical Exposures Discussion:

- Millie said Washington has made substantial strides in reducing exposures to some specific chemicals. She said several states, including Washington, have proposed policies to require safer alternatives to the use of chemicals. She asked the group to brainstorm recommendations related to chemical exposures. Suggestions included the following:
 - Creating limits on cumulative exposures.
 - Requiring a precautionary approach for emerging chemicals.
 - Giving the departments of Health and Ecology authority to require alternative assessments for toxic chemicals.
 - Ensuring agency plans (e.g., Department of Ecology's chemical action plan, Department of Health's biomonitoring plan, etc.) adequately address disparities.
 - Requiring a precautionary approach in decision making.
- Members discussed how chemical exposures could fall under the umbrella of an EJ policy and how it is important to include language specifically about health disparities in all recommendations.

6. Community Capacity Discussion:

- Lauren Jenks introduced this topic. She said communities have predictable needs and agencies can support those needs (e.g., providing grant writing training or analyzing local data). Velma agreed and added the need to educate communities.
- Members suggested the following recommendations:
 - Requiring agency commitment/plan to community engagement (e.g., support for an agency/community ombudsman or a staff person who could serve as a liaison).
 - Require agencies to work with communities to assess their capacity to reduce exposures.
 - Public participation grants (Department of Ecology is an example).
 - Hiring people from communities into agencies and contracting.
- Members suggested looking at EPA's Plan EJ 2014 to see what specific strategies are listed under Goal 2 related to empowering communities.

7. Healthy Communities Discussion:

- Committee members discussed this focus area briefly due to lack of time. Members discussed how healthy communities should be the goal for any EJ policy.
- Members suggested the need for an Environmental Rights for Washington state – the South African constitution has a good model for this.

8. Meeting Summary and Wrap Up:

- The next meeting is December 19 at King Street Center.
- Christy will send out a poll for a future meeting date.