NATIONAL PREVENTION STRATEGY AND AGENCY MISSIONS

The attached documents summarize the National Prevention Strategy from the perspective of individual agencies. The goal is to briefly demonstrate the "co-benefits" that can flow to the public's health and to each agency's mission as a result of increased attention to prevention and health promotion.

Each document:

- Notes the key agency-relevant actions that the NPS calls for;
- Describes how prevention and health promotion intersect with the agency's mission;
- Notes key activities or responsibilities the agency is already undertaking to promote prevention and health; and
- Indicates advisory boards or entities that may represent useful contacts for the Advisory Group.

Included here are documents on the Departments of Education, Defense, Housing and Urban Development, EPA, DOT and Agriculture. If useful, further documents can be developed on the additional agencies represented on the National Prevention Council.

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Key Actions Called for in the National Prevention Strategy:

- [The federal government will] support healthy housing while addressing unsafe housing conditions and health-related hazards, including injury hazards, asthma triggers, and lead-based paint hazards.[i]

- [The federal government will] use housing development subsidies to promote mixed-income neighborhoods and access to safe and healthy housing.[ii]

Health and HUD's Mission

> HUD's mission is to create strong, sustainable, inclusive communities and quality affordable homes for all. HUD is working to strengthen the housing market to bolster the economy and protect consumers; meet the need for quality affordable rental homes; *utilize housing as a platform for improving quality of life*; build inclusive and sustainable communities free from discrimination; and transform the way HUD does business.[iii] (emphasis added)

As HUD's mission statement acknowledges, housing is a key platform for improving quality of life. The National Prevention Strategy notes that housing-related factors that can impact people's wellbeing are numerous. These factors include:

- Design, construction, and maintenance standards.

- The presence or absence of safety devices. Features such as smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors, and radon detectors reduce the risk of preventable harm to individuals and families.

- Indoor hazards. Numerous indoor hazards can affect people's health.[iv] Pests can spread disease and trigger allergies. Allergens and other environmental factors trigger respiratory and other symptoms, and exacerbate asthma.[v] Lead in water or from paint has significant impacts on children's neurological development.[vi] Toxic chemicals pose risks to children and adults through accidental exposures. Secondhand smoke causes health problems, whether within one house or apartment, or to neighbors within multiunit buildings.[vii]

- Universal design standards. Housing standards that allow people with disabilities and the elderly to live safely at home contribute to their health and reduce medical and other costs.[viii]

- Affordability. People at lower income levels spend a high proportion of their budgets on housing. Access to stable, affordable housing gives people sufficient resources for nutritious food and healthcare costs, among other needs.[ix]

Because of these many links, housing policies can promote health and at the same time create other benefits. For example:

- Locating housing near key services reduces sprawl and conserves resources. It supports active transportation, such as walking, bike riding, and the use of public transportation. Active transportation makes individuals healthier, while also reducing pollution.

- Housing location can promote social interaction as well as economic opportunity, supporting businesses and stabilizing communities.

- Creating safe neighborhoods promotes physical activity and reduces stress, while also promoting neighborhood business.

- Features such as community gardens stimulate physical activity and healthy eating, while reducing vacant lots.

Examples of HUD-related Activities in the NPS:

Project Highlight: Partnership for Sustainable Communities (NPS, Pg. 16)
The Partnership for Sustainable Communities helps communities become economically strong and environmentally sustainable. Guided by six livability principles, the Environmental Protection Agency and Departments of Housing and Urban Development and Transportation are coordinating investments and aligning policies to give Americans more housing choices, make transportation systems more efficient and reliable, and support vibrant and healthy neighborhoods that attract businesses.

Project Highlight: Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative (NPS, Pg. 17)
The Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative (led by the White House Domestic Policy Council, White House Office of Urban Affairs, and the Departments of Housing and Urban Development, Education, Justice, Health and Human Services, and Treasury) supports the transformation of distressed neighborhoods into neighborhoods of opportunity – places that provide the right combination of circumstances, resources, and environments that both children and adults need to thrive. Key elements include high-quality schools and educational programs; safe and affordable housing; thriving commercial establishments; varied cultural amenities; and parks and other recreational spaces.

Project Highlight: Sustainable Community Regional Planning Grants Program (NPS, Pg. 51)

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has a new Sustainable Community Regional Planning Grants Program, which includes criteria to increase construction on underutilized infill development sites and a major focus of fostering transit-oriented, mixed-use development.

Key HUD Offices Related to Health

- HUD Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships ("a resource center for secular and faith-based non-profit organizations seeking to partner with HUD to address the housing and community development needs of the neighborhoods in which they operate").[x]

- HUD Office of Healthy Homes and Lead Hazard Control ("provides funds to state and local governments to develop cost-effective ways to reduce lead-based paint hazards, … enforces HUD's lead-based paint regulations, provides public outreach and technical assistance, and conducts technical studies to help protect children and their families from health and safety hazards in the home.)[xi]

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Key Actions Called for in the National Prevention Strategy:

- Improve education and employment opportunities.[xii]

- Support coordinated, comprehensive, and multicomponent programs and policies to encourage physical activity and physical education, especially in schools and early learning centers.[xiii]

- [Support] programs and policies to reduce high school dropout rates.[xiv]

- Early learning centers, schools, colleges and universities can ensure students have access to comprehensive health services, including mental health and counseling services.[xv]

Health and the Department of Education's Mission

The first three goals in the Department of Education's mission are to:

- Strengthen the Federal commitment to assuring access to equal educational opportunity for every individual;
- Supplement and complement the efforts of states, the local school systems and other instrumentalities of the states, the private sector, public and private nonprofit educational research institutions, community-based organizations, parents, and students to improve the quality of education; and
- Encourage the increased involvement of the public, parents, and students in Federal education programs.[xvi]

Engaging with the health of American's children is a fundamental way for the Department to further these goals because, as the National Prevention Strategy notes, "[e]ducation, employment, and health are linked."[xvii]

Education and Health: Good education is associated with improved adult health. Education is associated with greater longevity, improved health, and healthier behaviors.[xviii] Data from the CDC's National Health Interview Survey shows that people with higher levels of education are less likely to die within five years; have lower morbidity from most common acute and chronic diseases; are less likely to describe themselves as being "in poor health"; and are less likely to report anxiety or depression.[xix] Higher maternal education is associated with decreased risk of low infant birthweight and of infant mortality.[xx] While the mechanisms explaining these associations are complex and not fully understood, they appear to be mediated at least in part by health-related behaviors. Health risk factors where increased education is

associated with healthier behaviors include smoking, drinking, exercise, diet, illegal drug use, use of preventive health care, and care for hypertension and diabetes.[xxi]

Education and Other Social Factors that Impact Health: Higher education levels are associated with stable jobs and higher incomes.[xxii] Higher incomes let families afford healthcare costs, as well as healthy food, safe housing, and other needs.[xxiii] Employment also contributes to important social and psychological needs, including social support.[xxiv] Programs and policies to reduce high school dropout rates make advanced education more affordable, and promote job growth and quality can have a large impact on people's ability to make healthy choices.[xxv]

Lack of Healthcare Access: Impact on Education: In turn, health problems or lack of access to preventive services can hurt children's ability to succeed in the educational system. For example:

- A wide range of health problems can hamper children's ability to learn. For example, vision and hearing problems can impair children's in the classroom; children with asthma miss more days of school; ADHD and depression have been found to have negative effects on academic achievement.[xxvi]

- Improved physical fitness, an important health indicator among children, has been linked to better academic performance.[xxvii] The Department of Education is working with other agencies through "Let's Move," the first lady's initiative to increase to reduce childhood obesity through physical activity and healthier eating.

- A study found that students who had 15 minutes or more of recess a day were better behaved in the classroom.[xxviii]

- Access to affordable and comprehensive reproductive health services reduces teen pregnancy rates, allowing adolescent girls to attain higher levels of education and better opportunities.[xxix]

- Overweight and obese children are more likely to miss school and have poorer academic outcomes.[xxx]

Key Department of Education Advisory Boards

The Department of Education is advised by dozens of boards and commissions. A full list, with links to their charges, is available online.[xxxi] Several that may be of particular interest in discussing health co-benefits are:

- Advisory Commission on Accessible Instructional Materials in Postsecondary Education for Students with Disabilities[xxxii];
- Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance[xxxiii];

- Equity and Excellence Commission[xxxiv]; and
- President's Board of Advisors on Historically Black Colleges and Universities.[xxxv]

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Key Actions Called for in the National Prevention Strategy:

- Enhance capacity of state, tribal, local, and territorial governments to create healthy, livable and sustainable communities (e.g., increase access to healthy food….)[xxxvi]

- Support state, tribal, local, and territorial partners in strategic health security planning efforts for pandemics, biological and chemical attacks, *incidents affecting food and agriculture*, natural disasters, and other catastrophic events.[xxxvii]

- Improve agricultural policies to better align with the nutrition goals of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.[xxxviii]

- Strengthen the nation's comprehensive food safety system.[xxxix]

- Develop voluntary guidelines for food marketed to children and monitor and report on industry activities.[xl]

- Support initiatives to increase the availability of healthy and affordable foods in underserved urban, rural, and frontier communities. [xli]

- Implement the menu labeling provisions of the Affordable Care Act to help provide consistent facts about food choices in chain restaurants.[xlii]

- Provide information, tools, and expertise to help Americans understand and apply the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (e.g., MyPlate).[xliii]

- Implement programs and regulations to increase access to healthy food and eliminate food insecurity (e.g., Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, USDA Healthier U.S. School Challenge).[xliv]

- Improve and expand the use of existing food and nutrition systems to track changes in eating patterns and conduct research to identify effective approaches.[xlv]

Health and USDA's Mission

USDA's core functions include the key public health goals of improving food safety and enhancing nutrition and health through food assistance and nutrition education:

USDA Strategic Plan: The USDA has created a strategic plan to implement its vision. The framework of this plan depends on these key activities: expanding

markets for agricultural products and support international economic development, further developing alternative markets for agricultural products and activities, providing financing needed to help expand job opportunities and improve housing, utilities and infrastructure in rural America, *enhancing food safety by taking steps to reduce the prevalence of foodborne hazards from farm to table*, *improving nutrition and health by providing food assistance and nutrition education and promotion*, and managing and protecting America's public and private lands working cooperatively with other levels of government and the private sector.[xlvi] (emphasis added)

USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Services: The safety of the food supply is of the utmost importance to people's health. An estimated 48 million Americans – approximately one in every six – gets sick each year from foodborne illness.[xlvii] Of those, 128,000 are hospitalized, and 3,000 die.[xlviii] Food safety also requires appropriate handling, preparation, and storage of food to prevent contamination, both at home and at commercial food establishments.[xlix] The USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Services is response for the safety of America's supply of meat, poultry, and egg products. It conducts inspections and food security activities, as well as consumer outreach and education. USDA's Animal and Plant Inspection Service works to protect agricultural plant and animal species from pests and disease.

Healthy Food Initiatives: To stay healthy, people also need access to healthy and nutritious foods. Today, it is estimated that over 23 million people - including 6.5 million children – live in neighborhoods without access to supermarkets that sell healthy and affordable food.[l] As the National Prevention Strategy notes, "[p]roviding healthy foods in existing establishments, increasing the availability of full-service supermarkets and grocery stores, and supporting local and regional farm-to-table efforts (e.g., farmers markets, community gardens) have all been shown to increase access to healthy food."[li] Nearly 50 million people in American experience limited access to adequate, healthy food at some point during each year.[lii] This limited access can lead to overweight and obesity, as less-nutritious junk food is often more affordable than healthy food.[liii] Along with the Departments of Treasury and Health and Human Services, USDA supports Healthy Food Financing Initiatives, which encourage projects that increase access to healthy foods in low-income communities.[liv] USDA also administers food assistance programs including WIC, SNAP (formerly food stamps), and school meals programs.[lv]

Dietary Guidelines: Individuals and families also need information that allows them to make healthy food choices. Providing people with clear, understandable nutrition content information allows them to choose food that is healthy for themselves and their families.[lvi] Education about healthy cooking and eating can help people eat healthier overall diets, maintaining healthier weights and overall health.[lvii] USDA works with the Department of Health and Human Services to develop Dietary Guidelines, and educates Americans about nutrition using the Food Guide Pyramid.[lviii]

Agriculture Policies: Agriculture policies and programs that are good for Americans' health produce other benefits to the agricultural system and to society:

- Decreased energy consumption. Increasing access to healthy, locally-produced foods reduces transportation costs and fuel use.

- Preserving farmland. Sustainably grown produce helps preserve agricultural land.

- Expanded economic opportunities. Programs that encourage healthy food access in "food deserts" create local jobs and improved business environments.

- Economic support for farmers. Farmers markets that bring healthy food to communities are also an important outlet for the producers, promoting sales and customer loyalty.[lix]

Key USDA Advisory Boards

The Department of Agriculture is advised by scores of boards and commissions, many focusing on specific geographic regions. A full list, with links to their charges, is available through the GSA website.[lx] Several that may be of particular interest in discussing health co-benefits are:

- The National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council (NUCFAC)[lxi];
- Fruit and Vegetable Industry Advisory Committee [lxii]; and
- National Advisory Council on Maternal, Infant and Fetal Nutrition.[lxiii]

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Key Actions Called for in the National Prevention Strategy:

- [The federal government will] support delivery of clinical preventive services in various health care and out-of-home care settings, including Federally Qualified Health Centers; Bureau of Prisons, *Department of Defense*, and Veterans Affairs facilities; and among Medicare providers.[lxiv] (emphasis added)

- [The federal government will] improve access to high-quality mental health services and facilitate integration of mental health services into a range of clinical and community settings (e.g., Federally Qualified Health Centers, Bureau of Prisons, *Department of Defense*, and Veterans Affairs facilities).[lxv] (emphasis added)

Health and DoD's Mission

> The mission of the Department of Defense is to provide the military forces needed to deter war and to protect the security of our country.[lxvi]

In order to provide the military forces this mission requires, DoD needs to address the physical and emotional health of its service members. The Military Health System (MHS) serves this role, as well as conducting education, medical training, research, and response to military, natural, and humanitarian crises.[lxvii] The MHS is composed of the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs; the medical departments of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard, and Joint Chiefs of Staff; and the Combatant Command surgeons, and TRICARE providers. TRICARE is the health care program for Uniformed Service members, their families, and retirees.[lxix]

At the request of Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Michael Mullen, in 2009, the Consortium for Human and Military Performance at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences convened an effort to define "Total Force Fitness."[lxx] The framework that they developed considers the mind and body of the service member in the context of family, organization, and environment. Working groups further identified and developed eight domains of fitness: social, physical, environmental, medical, spiritual, nutritional, psychological, and behavioral.

Military health experts have defined three primary areas of poor health that hinder optimal performance: overweight, physical injury, and psychosocial dysfunction[lxxi]:

> Looking at the psychological components alone, nearly 40% of service members report symptoms and dysfunctions that significantly prevent a full and productive life. Stress and psychological symptoms reduce the ability to maintain appropriate weight, fitness, and nutrition and increase the likelihood of

developing chronic pain and dysfunction. Additionally, being overweight and having poor physical fitness compromises proper performance and often results in the discharge of service members each year…. What we do not consistently mandate are programs that would provide the core (basic) physical fitness needed to build onto for the special physical fitness requirements of the individual's mission. There is also no guidance on how to build both the physical and mental resilience of our warriors and their families so that they can better withstand and recover from the physical and mental insults of military service during training, deployment, war, and reintegration. Finally, lack of physical fitness contributes to injury, which is the number one cause of lost duty days among service members.[lxxii]

The authors note that in the development of the new Total Force Fitness framework, "[w]hat became clear…is that these facts represent the tip of the iceberg":

[A] community approach to the management of health and fitness is required. Although major medical diseases require standard medical treatment, more rapid and widely applicable nonmedical training approaches are needed for the majority of those who cannot perform optimally, for whatever reason. Optimizing stress management skills and maintaining a healthy physiology before and during deployment, coupled with a process for rapid improvement and reintegration into normal life and optimal functioning on return from wartime, may well prevent the progression to PTSD and the development of chronic pain and may well reduce the chances of obesity, injury, and poor performance. Thus, a holistic approach that integrates the current domains of health and function is requisite for achieving total force fitness.[lxxiii]

Examples of DOD-related Activities in the NPS:

Project Highlight: Wellness Resources for the Military Community (NPS, Pg. 50)
Afterdeployment.org (http://www.afterdeployment.org) is a proactive Department of Defense program designed to help families and service members identify their own symptoms and access assistance before a mental health or stress-related problem becomes serious. Through anonymous online self-assessments, the program provides a non-threatening way for military families to gauge their emotional well-being while providing information on how and where to seek help.

Key DoD Advisory Boards

Many DoD components are actively working on health and prevention issues. Primary contacts to consider:

- The Defense Health Board: The mission of this Board is to provide independent scientific advice/recommendations on matters relating to operational programs, health policy development, health research programs, and requirements for the

treatment and prevention of disease and injury, promotion of health and the delivery of health care to DoD beneficiaries. The next meeting of the Board is November 14-15, 2011.[lxxiv]

- Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, Consortium for Health and Military Performance: worked on developing the "Total Force Fitness" framework. [lxxv]

Department of Transportation

Key actions called for in the National Prevention Strategy:

- The Federal Government will [c]oordinate investments in *transportation*, housing, environmental protection, and community infrastructure to promote sustainable and healthy communities.[lxxvi]

- The Federal Government will [e]nhance capacity of state, tribal, local, and territorial governments to create healthy, livable and sustainable communities (e.g., increase access to healthy food and opportunities for physical activity, revitalize brownfields, *enhance alternative transportation options*, and develop green facilities and buildings).[lxxvii]

- The Federal Government will [p]romote the development of transportation options and systems that encourage active transportation and accommodate diverse needs.[lxxviii]

- The Federal Government will [s]upport state, tribal, local and territorial agencies in implementing, strengthening, and enforcing transportation safety policies and programs.[lxxix]

Health and the Department of Transportation's Mission

The mission of the Department of Transportation is to:

Serve the United States by ensuring a fast, safe, efficient, accessible and convenient transportation system that meets our vital national interests and enhances the quality of life of the American people, today and into the future.[lxxx]

Transportation policy can "enhance the quality of life" by promoting human health in a variety of ways:

- Promoting individual health through walking and biking: "Active transportation" includes walking and bike riding, as well as the use of public transportation. Obesity, heart disease, stroke, and diabetes among Americans have increased in recent decades, as physical activity has decreased.[lxxxi] For individuals, walking or bike riding promotes cardiovascular health, a healthy weight, and other positive health outcomes. Transportation policy at the state or local level can create safe and accessible avenues for active transportation.

- Increasing access to key health and other services: Many people, especially those at lower income levels, lack convenient and affordable transportation options to get to doctor's appointments, social services, school, or other important sites. Transportation policy can support physical and mental health by connecting underserved communities through affordable and reliable transportation options.

- Reducing congestion and pollution: Like walking and biking, the use of public transit reduces congestion and decreases pollution. The Department of Transportation encourages such decisions through multiple initiatives, including "It All Adds Up," a public education and partnership-building initiative that helps state and local agencies create awareness of how people's transportation decisions can affect congestion and air quality.[lxxxii]

- Improving transportation safety: Motor vehicle accidents are the leading cause of deaths for Americans aged 5-34.[lxxxiii] Policies that make vehicles and their use safer directly improve overall human health. The Department of Transportation addresses passenger vehicle and pedestrian safety; highway safety; rail safety; air safety; and related issues. In a recent new initiative, the Department is targeting "distracted driving."[lxxxiv]

Highlighted Activities from NPS:

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Incorporating Health in Regional Transportation Planning: Nashville, Tennessee
Recognizing the relationship between the built environment, transportation, and health, the Nashville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization adopted a set of guiding principles, goals, and objectives to help the region pursue quality growth as a central part of its 25-year regional transportation plan. Emphasizing mass transit, active transportation (e.g., biking, walking), and preservation and enhancement of roadways, the plan incorporates health considerations into infrastructure project selection. Sixty percent of the selection criteria are related to health, safety, congestion reduction, and active transportation, which has resulted in the inclusion of sidewalks, bicycle lanes, or shared-use lanes in 70 percent of funded roadway projects (up from 2 percent). The plan also reserves a minimum of 25 percent of Federal Surface Transportation Project dollars for active transportation.[lxxxv]

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Partnership for Sustainable Communities
The Partnership for Sustainable Communities helps communities become economically strong and environmentally sustainable. Guided by six livability principles, the Environmental Protection Agency and Departments of Housing and Urban Development and Transportation are coordinating investments and aligning policies to give Americans more housing choices, make transportation systems more efficient and reliable, and support vibrant and healthy neighborhoods that attract businesses.[lxxxvi]

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Safe Routes to School

Community leaders, schools, and parents across the United States are encouraging more children, including children with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school. Safe Routes to School programs improve safety and accessibility as well as reduce traffic and air pollution in the vicinity of schools. As a result, these programs help make bicycling and walking to school a safer and more appealing transportation choice, thus encouraging a healthy and active lifestyle from an early age. [lxxxvii]

Key Department of Transportation Advisory Boards

Several DOT Advisory Boards focus on health and safety issues, including:

- Motor Carrier Safety Advisory Committee ("to improve highway safety by providing advice and recommendations to the Administrator of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration on motor carrier safety programs and motor carrier safety regulations")[lxxxviii];

- Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration Medical Review Board ("to improve highway safety by providing Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) expert advice on medical standards, guidelines, and research on the medical certification of commercial motor vehicle (CMV) drivers")[lxxxix]; and

- National Emergency Medical Services Advisory Council ("a nationally recognized council of EMS representatives and consumers to provider advice and recommendations regarding EMS to the [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration]").[xc]

Key actions called for in the National Prevention Strategy:

- Improve quality of air, land, and water.[xci]

- The Federal Government will [c]oordinate investments in transportation, housing, *environmental protection*, and community infrastructure to promote sustainable and healthy communities.[xcii]

- The Federal Government will [e]nhance capacity of state, tribal, local, and territorial governments to create healthy, livable and sustainable communities (e.g., increase access to healthy food and opportunities for physical activity, *revitalize brownfields*, enhance alternative transportation options, and *develop green facilities and buildings*).[xciii]

- The Federal Government will [s]upport standards to reduce pollution and environmental exposure to ensure that all communities are protected from environmental and health hazards.[xciv]

- National Prevention Strategy Key Indicator: Number of days the Air Quality Index exceeds 100. Current: 11 days. Target: 10 days.[xcv]

- National Prevention Strategy Key Indicator: Amount of toxic pollutants released into the environment. Current: 1.95 million tons. Target: 1.75 million tons.[xcvi]

Health and the Environmental Protection Agency's Mission

Health is an integral part of the EPA's mission:

The mission of EPA is to protect human health and the environment.

EPA's purpose is to ensure that:

- all Americans are protected from significant risks to human health and the environment where they live, learn and work;
- national efforts to reduce environmental risk are based on the best available scientific information;
- federal laws protecting human health and the environment are enforced fairly and effectively;
- environmental protection is an integral consideration in U.S. policies concerning natural resources, human health, economic growth, energy,

transportation, agriculture, industry, and international trade, and these factors are similarly considered in establishing environmental policy;

- all parts of society -- communities, individuals, businesses, and state, local and tribal governments -- have access to accurate information sufficient to effectively participate in managing human health and environmental risks;
- environmental protection contributes to making our communities and ecosystems diverse, sustainable and economically productive; and
- the United States plays a leadership role in working with other nations to protect the global environment.[xcvii]

As the National Prevention Strategy notes, "Safe air, land, and water are fundamental to a healthy community environment."[xcviii] The EPA works in all of these areas in ways that protect human health:

Air: Air quality impacts a range of human health issues, including cardiovascular and respiratory diseases such as heart attacks and asthma.[xcix] The EPA implements the Clean Air Act, setting limits on multiple sources of air pollutants, including industrial sources and vehicles.[c] The Act also requires the EPA to set National Ambient Air Quality Standards for six common air pollutants: carbon monoxide, ground-level ozone, lead, nitrogen oxides, particulate matter, and sulfur dioxide.[ci] And, the EPA is the designated agency to protect the atmospheric ozone layer.[cii]

Land: Chemical and metal pollution on land, often the byproducts of industrial processes, can cause a broad range of health issues.[ciii] The EPA investigates and supervises cleanups at a range of oil or hazardous substance sites. [civ] The agency runs the Superfund program, which targets abandoned hazardous waste sites, and other programs that address land contamination.[cv] The EPA also registers and licenses pesticides, and sets maximum limits for pesticide residues in food.[cvi]

Water: Contaminants in drinking water can cause many human health problems: for example, microorganisms cause a range of gastrointestinal and systemic illnesses; and chemical contaminants can cause cancer, liver, kidney, and nervous system defects, as well as a broad variety of other health effects.[cvii] The EPA enforces and implements the Safe Drinking Water Act, the primary law protecting the nation's drinking water supply.[cviii] The agency sets standards for contaminants in drinking water, and oversees implementation of the standards by state and local governments and water utilities and providers.[cix] The Act addresses both protection of water sources (such as reservoirs and rivers) and water treatment.[cx] Agency efforts respond to numerous sources of contamination, including human-made chemicals, human and animal waste, pesticides, and natural contaminants.[cxi]

The EPA works on a broad range of additional cross-cutting issues that affect human health, including asbestos, lead, and mercury contamination.[cxii] The agency also supports Green Buildings and Green Homes programs, promoting awareness of ways to make buildings more energy-efficient and protective of human health.[cxiii]

Highlighted in the NPS

Increasing the Ability of Health Professionals to Identify, Prevent, and Reduce Environmental Health Threats: Clinicians can provide information and counseling on how to prevent, treat, and manage environmental-related exposures. Through Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Units, Federal agencies are partnering with the health care community to help clinicians assist parents in addressing environmental health concerns (e.g., indoor air pollutants, lead, mercury, and pesticides).[cxiv]

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Partnership for Sustainable Communities
The Partnership for Sustainable Communities helps communities become economically strong and environmentally sustainable. Guided by six livability principles, the Environmental Protection Agency and Departments of Housing and Urban Development and Transportation are coordinating investments and aligning policies to give Americans more housing choices, make transportation systems more efficient and reliable, and support vibrant and healthy neighborhoods that attract businesses.[cxv]

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Reducing Asthma Disparities by Addressing Environmental Inequities: San Francisco, California
The Regional Asthma Management and Prevention Initiative convened a diverse group (including public health, community-based organizations, schools, clinicians, and environmental health and justice groups) to improve air quality and reduce asthma rates that disproportionally impact low-income African American and Latino communities. The groups' success led to the passage of state-level diesel emissions regulations that will reduce diesel particulate matter by 43 percent by 2020 and are expected to prevent 150,000 cases of asthma, 12,000 cases of acute bronchitis, and 9,400 premature deaths over the next 15 years. Economic benefits of the regulations are estimated at between $48 and $69 billion.[cxvi]

Key EPA Advisory Boards

EPA has a broad range of advisory committees, many of which could be relevant for specific environmental health issues. A listing of all EPA federal advisory committees in place as of 2010 is available at the U.S. General Services Administration website.[cxvii] Committees that may be of particular interest include:

- Children's Health Protection Advisory Committee ("a body of researchers, academicians, health care providers, environmentalists, state and tribal government employees, and members of the public who advise EPA on regulations, research, and communication issues relevant to the environmental precipitants of health in children")[cxviii];

- National Environmental Justice Advisory Council ("provides leadership and direction on strategic planning to ensure that environmental justice is incorporated into agency operations")[cxix];

- Local Government Advisory Committee ("provides advice and recommendations that assist the EPA in developing a stronger partnership with local governments through building State and local capacity to deliver environmental services and programs".[cxx]

[i] National Prevention Strategy, p.16.

[ii] National Prevention Strategy, p. 16.

[iii] Department of Housing and Urban Development, "Mission" (online at http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/about/mission).

[iv] Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, "Where We Live Matters for Our Health: The Links Between Housing and Health," *Issue Brief 2* (September 2008).

[v] R Flournoy, *Breathing Easy from Home to School: Fighting the Environmental Triggers of Childhood Asthma* (PolicyLink, 2008).

[vi] National Institutes of Health, *Lead Poisoning*, http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/002473.htm.

[vii] LT Goodfellow and JB Waugh, "Tobacco Treatment and Prevention: What Works and Why," *Respiratory Care* 54, no 8 (2009): 1082-1090.

[viii] National Prevention Strategy, p. 14.

[ix] Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, "Where We Live Matters for Our Health: The Links Between Housing and Health," *Issue Brief 2* (September 2008).

[x] Department of Housing and Urban Development, Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, "Overview" (online at http://portal hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/faith_based).

[xi] Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Healthy Homes and Lead Hazard Control, "Overview" (online at http://portal hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/healthy_homes).

[xii] National Prevention Strategy, p. 23.

[xiii] National Prevention Strategy, p. 39.

[xiv] National Prevention Strategy, p. 105.

[xv] National Prevention Strategy, p. 50.

[xvi] U.S. Department of Education, "Mission" (online at http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/mission/mission html?src=ln).

[xvii] National Prevention Strategy, p. 22.

[xviii] Ross CE, Wu C. The Links between Education and Health. Am Sociol Rev. 1995;60: 719-45.; Cutler D, Lleras-Muney A. Education and Health: Evaluating Theories and Evidence. Bethesda, MD: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2006.; Braveman P, Egerter S. Overcoming Obstacles to Health: Report from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to the Commission to Build a Healthier America. Washington, D.C.: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Commission to Build a Healthier America, 2008.; Richards H, Barry R. U.S. Life Tables for 1990 by Sex, Race, and Education. J Forensic Econ. 1998;11(1): 9-26.

[xix] Cutler D, Lleras-Muney A. Education and Health: Evaluating Theories and Evidence. Bethesda, MD: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2006.

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