

2021 Children’s Healthy Learning Environments in Low-Income and/or Minority Communities Grant

Ten grantees were awarded a total of \$2 million for capacity building activities to address disproportionate children’s environmental health harms and risks in school and/or childcare settings in, or that primarily serve, low-income and/or minority communities.

Learn more about the awardees:

Health Resources in Action will build knowledge and capacity to improve environmental health conditions within schools across Massachusetts, optimizing outcomes related to healthy childhood development particularly for districts where students are most burdened by asthma and extreme heat. “Healthy Environments Advance Learning” (HEAL) will provide training and technical assistance on policies and practices to address environmental asthma triggers, extreme heat, and ventilation to 5-7 school districts in low-income communities. HEAL will also leverage partner networks to disseminate resources to all MA public school districts and across New England.

Environmental Protection in the Caribbean will build capacity within U.S. Virgin Islands schools for safe, clean and affordable drinking water. An existing Eco-Schools program, led by VI Conservation Society, will provide the project framework for increased awareness, knowledge, and skills about the importance of clean, safe drinking water, water pollution, water quality testing, and promoting positive behaviors that improve human and environmental health. Safe, clean drinking water is not currently available in many schools, and water bottle filling stations will be installed to demonstrate and provide access.

Women for a Healthy Environment will complete over 200 eco-healthy assessments and offer solutions and technical assistance to address environmental risks at childcare centers in low-income and minority communities across Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Additionally, childcare center staff across Philadelphia will participate in webinars focused on relevant environmental health topics. Through this cooperative agreement, Women for a Healthy Environment will form a statewide partnership with childcare centers to strategize bringing additional resources and mitigation strategies to centers across the commonwealth.

Milwaukee Public Schools will create a system of support to educate and train school staff and community members in how to use newly constructed green spaces, outdoor classrooms and traffic gardens. MPS will work to ensure that the outdoor spaces support the health plans designed by school staff, including a reduction in transmission of COVID-19, and include greenery that can filter air pollution and mitigate air pollution exposure, while supporting students’ mental and physical health.

The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston will conduct “Outreach for Healthy Learning Environments in West Texas.” Through this project, UTHealth will partner with the Southwest Center for Pediatric Environmental Health to build capacity for healthier learning environments within low-income schools in the Paso del Norte Region. The main objectives are to provide culturally relevant information for school decision-makers to identify health risk drivers, demonstrate best practices for maintaining an environmentally safe school, and share preparedness procedures in anticipation of an adverse event.

Wichita State University will develop an innovative, practical decision-making tool for Kansas schools and childcare facilities located in low-income communities and high-traffic areas to mitigate indoor air pollution, reduce childhood respiratory disease, increase school attendance, and improve overall school achievement.

The American Lung Association will build awareness and capacity for schools in Tribal communities on the Fort Peck, Blackfeet, and Crow/Northern Cheyenne reservations in Montana to establish lung-friendly schools (LFS) policies and practices, thereby reducing children's exposure to environmental health contaminants. These tribal communities are on the front-line of climate change-related health impacts and face disproportionate environmental health hazards from intense wildfire smoke episodes. Bolstering the role of schools to provide a clean air respite based on their own priorities will improve the health of everyone at the school. Many of the mitigation strategies and trainings available through the ALA provide evidence-based and best practice efforts that also help reduce COVID-19 transmission risk. Montana also has naturally high levels of radon, prompting the need for education and awareness on this EH hazard that can work to improve public health.

Northern Arizona University, in partnership with the Cocopah Tribe, will expand upon its preliminary assessments of poor air quality and water contamination on Tribal lands. NAU will train Cocopah tribal professionals in the protocols for sample acquisition and analyses at the Cocopah Tribe Head-Start and Day Care and will enable the Tribe to develop their own air and water monitoring program.

Child Care Aware of America will build the capacity of childcare professionals and decision-makers in South and Central Oregon areas severely impacted by air pollution from wildfires. Through community assessments, trainer curriculum, train-the-trainer models, bilingual resources and technical assistance, CCAoA will transfer educational information and strategies to help address the health hazards and risks associated with air quality impacts from wildfire smoke.

The University of Mississippi Medical Center will evaluate the indoor air quality at three Early Head Start Childcare centers in central Mississippi. The project will use the accumulated data and available educational resources to develop a simple and manageable method to educate and train childcare administrators and teachers to improve indoor air quality across Mississippi. The implementation kit will be made available to other Early Head Start Childcare centers.