

Linking Public and Environmental Health at the Community Level

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= Health Risk

**Reduce
toxics**



**Reduce
Risk**

Less Risk

Common Household Products Containing Toxics

- Pesticides
- Cleaners
- Personal care products
- Beauty products
- “Home Improvement”
products



Reducing the health risks of toxics



Focus: Children's Health

- In North America, childhood asthma, learning disabilities, developmental disorders, cancers have dramatically increased (GBPSR, CICH)
- Known or suspected link to chemical exposure in many cases
- In-home chemical exposure may be particularly significant because North American children spend up to 90% of their time indoors (CEC)

Question:

How do you reduce the risk
of adverse health effects
in children?



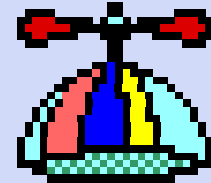
Answer:

Change Parental Skills and Knowledge!

Help parents to:

- Understand health risks associated with exposure to toxics
- Know which types of products contain toxics
- Gain a better understanding of product labels
- Begin to use alternative products

Safer Products In Neighborhoods* (SPIN)



- Goals:
- Improve the health of children in Worcester through reduced exposure to toxic chemicals.
 - Strengthen local infrastructure by connecting environmental and public health advocates.

*Funded in part by the Jesse B. Cox Foundation

Key Change Agents #1: Public Health Outreach Workers

- Work established “beats” in Worcester’s neighborhoods
- Received training from TURI on toxics in household products
- Began educating parents during home visits in August 2002

Key Change Agents #2: Environmental Outreach Workers

- Work on specific environmental issues, e.g. pressure-treated wood in playgrounds
- Received training from TURI on toxics in household products
- Began giving presentations to community groups in September 2002

Potential Barriers to Change

- Force of tradition/peer influence
- Belief that current practices pose little or no risk
- Lack of information on product constituents and chemical effects
- Lack of effective/affordable alternatives
- Quality concerns

Some Lessons Learned #1

- Public health is an effective “hook” for toxics issues
- Concepts and language can be barriers
- Appropriate role: build capacity and foster collaboration
- Motivators for behavior change in low income/Hispanic populations

Some Lessons Learned #2

Note: this was NOT a research project, rather an educational outreach project. Therefore, this is program evaluation data that should be interpreted only as an indicator of possible trends.

Product Use Changes

17 of 53 users changed from toxic to less or non-toxic products (focus on kitchen counter-top and bathroom cleaners)

Some Lessons Learned #3

Behavioral Changes

SPIN RESULTS	Average Change	Standard Deviation	Count of Cases	t ratio	one-tailed Significance Level
Read Labels	-0.93	1.18	60	-6.14	<.0005
Open Windows	-0.70	0.92	61	-5.99	<.0005
Wear Gloves	-0.68	1.40	60	-3.79	<.0005
No One Home	-0.50	1.55	58	-2.46	<.005

Ongoing Challenges

- Organizational cultural differences and expectations in public health/ environmental collaborations.
- Special challenges and considerations in working with low income populations.
- Building community capacity for the long term.