

**Report 27:** Environmental Justice and Health Disparities Strategy & Grant Program

**Convener:** Sacoby Wilson

**Brief History:** NIEHS has had a significant role in addressing EJ and HD issues; however, it has lost its focus. Its commitment to investing in EJ & HD of vulnerable populations is not evident to its stakeholders.

**Discussion Highlights:**

1. NIEHS has the opportunity to re-focus on vulnerable communities with an emphasis on being proactive.
2. There are currently no existing Health Disparities (HD) Centers with a focus on environmental health.
  - While the National Institute of Minority Health and Health Disparities had a competitive supplement program on EH, it is ending.
  - Nothing looking at diseases with environmental etiology exists
3. Opportunity for great public health impact
4. An NIEHS EJ/HD Centers Program could have great impact for minority & vulnerable communities
5. An EJ & HD strategy should contain a focus on the following key elements:
  - Research
  - Community Education and Training
  - STEM Curriculum (Integrative Context) K-16 & Graduate
  - Transdisciplinary (engage sociologists, anthropologists, economists, etc.)
  - Capacity Building
    - Fellows
    - Community Scholars (Job Opportunities/skills development & AmeriCorp-like)
  - Pipeline
  - Cooperative agreements
6. Different grant mechanisms to support this work
  - Regional Centers

- MSI-focused
  - Mentoring
  - Address local and regional community issues (use existing research tools, such as GIS/mapping tools)
  - Meet gaps within extant EHS Core Centers
    - Encourage researchers to do work in partnership with communities to address real EH issues of concern
    - Address data gaps with a priority on vulnerable populations
  - ViCTER/Glue grants to bring appropriate skills to bear on EJ & HD
  - Other mechanisms to build the capacity of community-centered institutions that serve environmental health disparity populations, community-based organizations, as well as promote/advance transdisciplinary research/partnerships.
7. An EJ & HD Strategy at NIEHS could:
- Meet needs of HP 2010 & 2020
  - Facilitate/promote action on data for
    - public health impact
    - policy
    - prevention
  - Build, sustain, and nurture community-based organization capacity
  - Advance communication to vulnerable communities
8. Focus on prevention and public health at NIEHS is essential
9. Partnership building is a key issue and was a successful outcome from the past NIEHS EJ RFA.
10. There is a need to learn from and build off of the elements that worked from past & current programs. What is NIEHS currently doing in terms of HD and EJ? What is the balance in the NIEHS Portfolio??
11. Measuring and understanding impact is critical.
- Qualitative and quantitative measures (scales & objectives)
  - Context of Social Determinants of Health

- Differential burden, exposures, risks, health outcomes (cumulative impacts)
- Identify prevention strategies.

12. Three legs of the EJ Stool

- Environmental Hazards
- Social Determinants of Health/psychosocial stressors
- Access to PH resources/Interventions

**Recommendations:**

This group recommends that NIEHS

1. Develop a comprehensive EJ & HD strategy across the institute
2. Implement the EJ & HD strategy – develop funding opportunities that meet the critical needs:
  - a. Research
  - b. Community Education and Training
  - c. STEM Curriculum (Integrative Context) K-16 & Graduate
  - d. Transdisciplinary (engage sociologists, anthropologists, economists, etc.)
  - e. Capacity Building
    - i. Fellows
    - ii. Community Scholars (Job Opportunities/skills development & AmeriCorp-like)
  - f. Pipeline – investing in the future researchers
  - g. Cooperative agreements
  - h.
3. Find its niche within its mission – Act on prevention and promoting public health!
  - a. Especially for vulnerable populations
  - b. Consider in broad context of community development, urban planning, transportation, sustainability, etc.
4. Examine the NIEHS EJ/HD portfolio – how does it compare to other research supported by the institute. Id opportunities.

5. Focus on impacts – promote research that focuses on social determinants of health --  
Differential burden, exposures, risks, health outcomes (cumulative impacts) that leads to  
identifying prevention strategies
6. Reflect on what has worked from past investments and build on it

**Discussion Participants:**

1. Sacoby Wilson (leader)
2. Beverly Wright
3. Darryl Hood
4. Peggy Shepard
5. Ericka Reid
6. Andrea Hricko
7. Rick Woychick
8. Jose Cordero
9. Lisa Edwards
10. Suk Mei Ho
11. Joellen Harper Austin
12. Liam O’Fallon (scribe)