



Action Today for Children's Tomorrow!

**Collaborative Effort on
Children's Environmental Health
in New Brunswick**



Vision

To provide a clean and healthy environment for children in New Brunswick.

Mission

To work collaboratively to improve children's health and wellbeing by increasing children's exposure to healthy environments and reducing children's exposure to environmental hazards that may contribute to illness, disability, disease or death.

Overview

In May 2005, a committee of New Brunswick organizations and agencies began discussions on developing a strategy for action to reduce children's exposure to environmental hazards that may affect health by causing illness, disability, disease or death. From these discussions, it was decided to establish a broad network of government departments, non-government organizations, private sector agencies, communities and individuals who are interested in working collaboratively to address this issue.

The format of the collaborative effort is one which brings all stakeholders together in a spirit of mutual cooperation and encourages each agency to contribute in whatever way possible. Like a braid, this effort is made stronger by intertwining everyone's efforts. Agencies participating in the collaborative effort pool resources, expertise, knowledge and experience and, through building upon each other's strengths, develop and implement a coordinated action strategy that will benefit all of New Brunswick.

Convention on the Rights of the Child

The work of the collaborative effort fits within the framework of the U.N. General Assembly Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Article 24

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health.

Article 27

1. States Parties recognize the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.

Implementation Principles

The work of the collaborative effort is guided by the following principles:

1. Flexible Collaborations
 - a. Common vision and shared objectives
 - b. Ownership of and commitment to the strategy
 - c. Build and maintain trust
 - d. Respect contribution of each collaborator
2. Where possible, share and utilize existing resources/materials.
3. Where appropriate, explore innovative approaches.
4. Activities should be evidence informed.
5. Activities should recognize and/or involve the population or community to which they are targeted.
6. Focus energy on achievable actions that are realistic and build onto existing opportunities by linking new actions with existing programs or activities whenever possible.
7. Build in progress indicators to gauge success of selected activities.
8. Maintain engagement with the strategy and the implementation committee by reporting regularly on the progress of activities/ actions.
9. Walk the talk / lead by example.
10. Precautionary principle.
11. Be prepared for unprecedented success!

Advocacy

Various groups and organizations participate in the collaborative effort and, therefore, the collaborative effort cannot speak for the involved agencies. It can, however, provide support to those who wish to play an advocacy role by providing them with information that may assist in their pursuit and/or connect them with groups or organizations working on a similar issue.

Children's Environmental Health Strategy for ACTION

Goal 1: To develop and maintain a collaborative effort of all stakeholders involved in children's environmental health in New Brunswick

- 1(a) Establish a collaborative effort of all organizations involved in children's environmental health
- 1(b) Encourage the involvement of all stakeholders including government departments and families, children's, health and environmental organizations
- 1(c) Build capacity within the stakeholder groups

Goal 2: To develop and advance educational opportunities for families and professionals

- 2(a) Identify quality educational tools and increase their accessibility
- 2(b) Inform families and professionals about environmental health concerns for children
- 2(c) Inform and engage the public and increase public support to reduce exposure to environmental hazards
- 2(d) Encourage industries to become leaders in protecting children's environmental health

Goal 3: To encourage and promote research

- 3(a) Support the preparation of comprehensive reports on NB children's environmental health
- 3(b) Identify research gaps and support research and knowledge transfer to better understand the impact of contaminants and interactions of contaminants (*objective under review*)
- 3(c) Support research that identifies and fills gaps in best practices in children's environmental health
- 3(d) Work towards sufficient resources for research

Goal 4: To improve policy and legislation related to children's environmental health

- 4(a) Spearhead and work collaboratively with national policy and legislative initiatives
- 4(b) Encourage the establishment of government agencies and the development of legislation to uphold the rights of children to a healthy environment
- 4(c) Advance specific provincial legislative or policy initiatives to reduce children's exposure to environmental hazards
- 4(d) Support the incorporation of children's environmental health concerns into provincial government initiatives through multiple departments
- 4(e) Encourage municipal governments to consider children's environmental health when policy is developed or updated

Goal 5: To reduce exposure to specific contaminants through strategic directions

- 5(a) Focus on multiple pathways of exposure to environmental contaminants, including those from food, water, soil, air and consumer products.
 - (i) Identify contaminants or groups of contaminants that may adversely affect children's health where they live, learn, and play.
 - (ii) Establish environmental and exposure baselines for contaminants.
 - (iii) Establish criteria to assess contaminant exposures.
 - (iv) Prioritize contaminants or groups of contaminants for strategic actions.
- 5(b) Address multiple exposures in children by promoting the use of action-oriented frameworks such as human health risk assessment, health impact assessment, and ecosystem approaches to health.
- 5(c) Identify critical knowledge gaps in contaminant exposures, effects and mechanisms of action (in keeping with goal 3).
- 5(d) Develop and implement strategic actions to reduce exposures to environmental contaminants based on the evidence, lessons learned, and the precautionary principle.

Goal 6: To promote and foster children's interaction with nature

- 6 (a) Change policies to encourage outdoor learning. *(objective under review)*

- 6 (b) Include outdoor learning as a component of the curriculum for post secondary students of education. *(objective under review)*
- 6 (c) Shift the culture of education so that “outdoors” is now the thing to do. *(objective under review)*
- 6 (d) Educate families and caregivers so they understand the importance of outdoor play.
- 6 (e) Build a community by working together across sectors and within neighbourhoods.
- 6 (f) Change the landscape through built environments, community gardens and green spaces.

