Environmental Health at the Public Health Institute

Safe and clean environments protect health

The environment—the air we breathe, food we consume, and the climate around us—profoundly impacts health. PHI works to protect health and reduce health inequities by addressing environmental problems.

Since 1964, the Public Health Institute’s partners, programs and researchers have focused on what they do best: their work. They rely on PHI’s comprehensive operational infrastructure to quickly move their public health programs from concept to implementation to impact.

PHI’s approach includes:

**Researching** the public’s exposure to environmental toxins and connections to diseases like cancer.

**Tracking** environmental health threats and predicting future ones in order to improve planning and mitigation efforts.

**Advocating** for policies and regulations that create cleaner environments and better health.

**Educating** the public and policy makers about the impact of the environment, including climate change, on public health.

**Reducing health inequities** by focusing on the needs of underserved communities most vulnerable to environmental health hazards.

The Public Health Institute (PHI) is an independent, nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting health, well-being and quality of life throughout California, across the nation and around the world.

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The impact of PHI’s work in environmental health

Cleaner air, better health PHI’s Regional Asthma Management and Prevention program helped pass California diesel emissions regulations that are projected to prevent 150,000 cases of asthma, 12,000 cases of acute bronchitis and 9,400 premature deaths over 15 years.

Informing local health policies When the city of San Jose considered closing down cooling centers as part of the city’s heat alert response plan, PHI’s California Environmental Health Tracking Program (CEHTP) provided data showing that heat-related emergency room visits peaked immediately following heat alerts. San Jose kept cooling centers open and vulnerable residents had a way to escape the heat and protect their health.

Linking chemical exposure and disease Research by PHI’s Child Health and Development Studies demonstrated that women who had been exposed to DDT as kids and showed high levels of the chemical during pregnancy were five times more likely to develop breast cancer later in life—an important finding as DDT, although now banned in the U.S., is still used in many countries worldwide.

Protecting vulnerable communities from climate change CEHTP conducted the Health Impact Assessment (HIA) for California’s cap-and-trade program, a critical element of the state’s Global Warming Solutions Act. The HIA’s recommendation to dedicate 10% of program revenue to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate the health impacts of climate change in the most disadvantaged communities in the state was enacted into law.

Investing in women for sustainable development PHI’s Center for Public Health and Climate Change has been a vocal advocate at international meetings on climate change for increasing investments in women’s leadership as a vital strategy for addressing climate change and achieving sustainable development in some of the poorest regions of the world.

Other PHI programs working in environmental health The California Food & Justice Coalition • Bay Area Regional Health Inequities Initiative • Public Health Trust

For more information about PHI environmental health programs, visit www.phi.org or contact PHI communications at communications@phi.org.