



Children's Health Fund



Columbia University
MAILMAN SCHOOL
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HIGH LEVELS OF ANXIETY ARE FOUND AMONG CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN THE GULF REGION IMPACTED BY OIL SPILL DISASTER

TOWN MEETINGS IN SOUTHERN PLAQUEMINES PARISH, LOUISIANA HOSTED BY THE CHILDREN'S HEALTH FUND AND THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY'S MAILMAN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH REVEAL DEEP CONCERNS ABOUT FUTURE OF ENTIRE REGION

June 22, 2010 – Two months after the Deepwater Horizon oil rig explosion caused the oil spill now globally acknowledged as the worst environmental disaster in our nation's history, the residents of the Gulf region immediately impacted are exhibiting dramatically high levels of anxiety, both among adults and children, about the future health and well-being of the region. Many children – and parents – still recovering from Katrina are now reeling from a second major trauma as a result of the oil catastrophe.

At a public town hall meeting today in Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana, Irwin Redlener, MD, the President of the Children's Health Fund, www.childrenshealthfund.org and the Director of the National Center for Disaster Preparedness at the Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health, spoke with families and children about their perceived beliefs and concerns about the impact the oil spill is having and will have on their lives and livelihoods in the region.

"We are seeing a palpable frustration among these families due to the lack of information about health risks in this region by trusted and important authorities," said David Abramson, PhD, director of research at the National Center for Disaster Preparedness of the Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health.

Dr. Redlener added, "There is a disconnect among elected Federal and State officials and local Parish officials who don't seem to be able to provide the answers to both long and short-term risks or issues that families need to hear right now."

The team of public health experts and physicians that accompanied Dr. Redlener learned a number of points on the fact-finding mission, including a statement from a participant that the oil spill is far worse than the impact of Hurricane Katrina.

“Since Katrina, the Children’s Health Fund and the National Center for Disaster Preparedness have been in the Gulf providing comprehensive medical and mental health care and, importantly, surveying the long-term health and mental health issues among children as a result of the disaster,” Dr. Redlener continued. “It was revealing to learn that residents here feel that while Katrina may have destroyed their houses, they could rebuild. This disaster is creating a greater sense of permanence and finality to the community. The irrevocable damage to their communities, and health, feels very real and lasting. And that is terrifying.”

About the Children’s Health Fund & National Center for Disaster Preparedness

Founded in 1987 by singer/songwriter Paul Simon and pediatrician/advocate Irwin Redlener, MD, Children's Health Fund (www.childrenshealthfund.org) is the nation's leading pediatric provider of mobile-based health care for homeless and low-income children and their families. CHF's mission is to bring health care directly to those in need through the development and support of innovative medical programs, response to public health crises, and the promotion of guaranteed access to health care for all children. Teams of dedicated medical professionals in CHF's 24 pediatric programs in 15 states and the District of Columbia have brought essential primary care services through more than 2 million patient visits.

In response to the devastation of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, CHF established three permanent health and mental health care projects in the Gulf Coast area; the New Orleans Children’s Health Project, in partnership with Tulane University School of Medicine, the Baton Rouge Children’s Health Project, in partnership with LSU Health Sciences Center School of Medicine and the Mississippi Gulf Coast Children’s Health Project, in partnership with Coastal Family Health Center.

The National Center for Disaster Preparedness (NCDP) at the Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health and Children’s Health Fund spearheaded comprehensive trainings to local mental health professionals on critical topics such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Compassion Fatigue/Burnout in Providers, and to date has held more than 70 workshops that trained over 1,700 local professionals.

Mailman’s NCDP has also been conducting one of the largest face-to-face cohort studies of children and families in the Gulf since 2006. The Gulf Coast Child and Family Health Study (G-CAFH) is an ongoing research effort conducted by NCDP in partnership with Children's Health Fund and with researchers at the Louisiana State University School of Public Health. The project has chronicled the physical and mental health consequences of the initial hurricane and traced the path to recovery since Katrina for approximately one thousand randomly sampled individuals in Louisiana and Mississippi families who are interviewed annually.

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