

**Subject:** Call to Action: Stop Unethical Study on Children

PLEASE FORWARD WIDELY – ESPECIALLY TO OTHER PARENTS

Dear Moms & Dads,

I'm writing to alert you to a disturbing government study about the effects of household chemicals on young children and to ask for your help. This study will lay the groundwork for policies that have the potential to affect all our children, but ironically it is partially funded by the lobbying arm of the chemical industry. This is a clear and dangerous conflict of interest that we, as parents, must not tolerate.

Although the EPA recently announced it would "re-review" the study and has paused it for now, if we do not let them know how strongly we oppose this study, they may decide to go ahead with it after all.

You may have already heard that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is planning a two-year investigation into the ways in which pesticides and other household chemicals (e.g., chemicals commonly found in Teflon, Scotchgard, furniture sealants, and cosmetics) enter children's bodies ([www.epa.gov/cheers/images/cheers\\_qanda.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/cheers/images/cheers_qanda.pdf)). Study participants will include families with young children who live in northeast Florida and who agree to have their child monitored and tested for chemical exposure. As compensation, these families will receive \$970, a t-shirt, and a bib among other things. Families that complete the study will also be able to keep the video camcorder they will use to record their children's activities (<http://www.epa.gov/cheers/basic.htm#background>).

This study, called the Children's Environmental Exposure Research Study (CHEERS), will provide EPA with data to determine "safe" levels of pesticide exposure for young children. Although reliable information about the effects of household chemicals on children is long overdue, CHEERS is unethical for the following reasons:

1. The study is funded partially by the American Chemistry Council (ACC), a large chemical trade association representing large manufacturers like Teflon-maker DuPont. Despite claims from both ACC and EPA that the study's integrity will be safeguarded, ACC's Fall 2004 newsletter states that this "project also contains considerable leverage, in that \$2 million of ACC funds add to \$7 million of EPA funds" ([www.uslri.org/documents/cat\\_23/doc\\_415.pdf](http://www.uslri.org/documents/cat_23/doc_415.pdf)).

2. According to the Environmental Working Group, an advocacy and research organization opposing the study, representatives from the chemical industry will serve on the Peer Advisory Committee offering technical advice. Moreover, Battelle and Aerostar Environmental Services, the two companies that will conduct the study, are frequent contractors of the chemical industry  
([http://www.ewg.org/issues/humantesting/20041029/letter\\_20041029.php](http://www.ewg.org/issues/humantesting/20041029/letter_20041029.php))
3. Participating families will not be informed about the potential health hazards of the chemicals in question. This despite the fact that pesticide exposure has been linked to birth defects, leukemia, brain cancer, soft tissue sarcoma, and neurological problems and despite EPA's own fact sheet on pesticides and children, which advises parents to "teach children that 'pesticides are poisons'" and recommends the removal of children and toys from any area that will be sprayed  
(<http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/factsheets/childsaf.htm>).
4. The study's rewards may exploit low-income families by encouraging them to use pesticides and other chemicals when they otherwise might not.
5. The study lacks safeguards to protect children with high levels of toxic chemicals (<http://www.beyondpesticides.org/news/daily.htm>).

On November 8, in response to an outcry from EPA scientists and environmental groups, the EPA study was postponed until Spring 2005 for additional review. We don't know what this review will include, but according to a report in *Science* magazine, it's not likely to address the funding from ACC (11/19/2004, vol.306, p. 1273).

THIS IS THE TIME TO LET EPA KNOW THAT WE WON'T STAND FOR SUCH AN UNETHICAL STUDY. THIS IS THE TIME TO TAKE ACTION SO THAT "CHEERS" IS BOOED OFF STAGE.

Please contact EPA's Administrator, Michael Leavitt, at the following address to demand that CHEERS be stopped:

Michael Leavitt  
EPA Administrator  
Ariel Rios Building  
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20460  
Ph: 202-564-4700  
Email: [leavitt.michael@epa.gov](mailto:leavitt.michael@epa.gov)

Please also consider writing a letter to the editor of your local newspaper and/or asking local radio/TV stations for a story on this study. In Washington, DC, you can send a letter to the editor at:

Washington City Paper – ewemple@washingtoncitypaper.com  
Washington Post -- [letters@washpost.com](mailto:letters@washpost.com)  
Washington Times – letters@washingtontimes.com

If you live outside DC, you can get contact information for your local newspapers and TV stations at [www.newsdirectory.com](http://www.newsdirectory.com). Radio stations are listed by zip code at [www.radio-locator.com](http://www.radio-locator.com).

In your letters/calls please make it clear that as a parent you expect any government study of the effects of chemicals on children to:

- Be independent of chemical industry funds and influence
- Provide clear and accurate information to participating parents about health risks associated with the chemicals under study
- Minimize, if not eliminate, the possibility that participating children are exposed to a greater amount of dangerous chemicals than they would otherwise
- Include safeguards a) preventing poor families from using toxic substances in exchange for material rewards and b) protecting children with high levels of exposure

For more information about this study, please refer to the following resources:

“EPA Postpones Pesticide Study” (11/19/04, *Science*)  
“Pesticide Study Using Children Postponed” (11/10/04, *Associated Press*)  
“EPA Suspends Study on Kids and Pesticides” (11/10/04, *Washington Post*)  
“EPA Criticized for Study of Child Pesticide Exposure” (11/5/04, *Science*)  
“EPA Accused of Conflict of Interest Over Chemicals Study” & “Bad Funding” (11/4/04, *Nature*)  
Editorial: “Experimenting on Children” (11/2/04, *St. Petersburg Times*)  
“Study of Pesticides and Children Stirs Protests” (10/30/04, *Washington Post*)  
“EPA, Chemical Group Make for Very Bad Mix” (10/29/04, *The Republican*)  
Editorial: “A Conflict of Interest” (10/29/04, *Orlando Sentinel*)  
“Chemical Industry Funds Aid EPA Study” (10/26/04, *Washington Post*)

Environmental Working Group ([www.ewg.org](http://www.ewg.org))  
Beyond Pesticides (<http://www.beyondpesticides.org/news/daily.htm>)

Thank you!