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Bridging Climate Change and Public Health

Energy Insecurity Workgroup Meeting

Meeting Agenda – | August 25th | 2:30PM -3:30PM

Purpose of Meeting:

1. Discuss the connection between energy insecurity and public health, climate change, and vulnerable populations through the lens of health equity.

2. Discuss the need for community and stakeholder engagement: establish the energy insecurity workgroup

3. Facilitate communication and collaboration across different community sectors

- Welcome and agenda overview (5 mins) – Lauren
  - Round of introductions
  - Use Greenlink Equity Map (GEM) to understand relationship b/w indicators
  - The mapping tool will move us in direction of strategizing solutions in a multisectoral way to address housing, health, and energy insecurity

- Introduction and Greenlink Equity Map Presentation (40 mins) – Matt Cox
  - Matt Cox is the CEO of Greenlink
    - Focus on clean energy and equity research
    - Help cities in their clean energy transition
    - Was city of Atlanta's first energy efficiency manager
    - PhD in Environmental and Energy Policy
  - Overview of Greenlink Equity Map (GEM) - is an online map designed to help visualize equity-related issues and how burdens are spread across communities.
    - Problem:
      - Cities report getting equity data as a major challenge

GEM was trying to bring social equity to climate policy and program development
- Solution:
  - GEM tool provides equity indicators to understand the demographic, socioeconomic situation of communities
  - GEM was developed initially for 50 cities

- GEM features:
  - High level grouping of equity indicators
    - Demographics, energy (electric, gas) and water burden, health, housing, technology, income, and more
    - Can filter by percentile of energy burden (example: Show me top 50% most energy burdened)
    - Data can be downloaded into CSV file

- GEM process guide https://www.equitymap.org/process-guide
  - Step by step process on how to implement the knowledge found from the data.
  - Things to keep in mind…
    - Importance of productive working relationships b/w stakeholders to be able to discuss the data together
    - How can the data tell a story about the lived experience?
    - Where are the knowledge gaps that need to be filled in that the data cannot meet?

- How to sign-up: https://www.equitymap.org/how-to-access-gem
  - Local organizations can access with no cost
  - Access is available for 12 months before it needs to be renewed

- Presentation Q and A (10 min)
  - How is utility burden calculated?
    - Energy burden is calculated from utility bills and using peer reviewed test methodologies
  - Where can we find the explanation of the methodologies for the different indicators?
    - Explanation for methodology on the website w/ sources

  - Are utility disconnects also being tracked?

- Utility disconnects are not tracked because they are not defined geographically well enough
- Are there opportunities for mentoring from cities who have successfully implemented this tool to find solutions?
  - There are opportunities for mentoring from other cities who have used the tool to mentor other cities new to the tool.
    - examples of what cities have done with this tool
  - 65 cities have used GEM tool within a year
  - https://www.denvergov.org/Government/Agencies-Departments-Offices/Climate-Action-Sustainability-Resiliency/Climate-Protection-Fund
https://www.portland.gov/bps/cleanenergy/about

- When working with the 65 cities, what department(s) in general took the lead on using GEM?
  - Sustainability offices took the lead, but planning offices, health departments, and building offices have begun exploring the data

- Was all this information from the census? If not, what kind of research was done?
  - No raw data collection was done.
  - Most data from census and CDC
  - Energy burden data required more processing
    - specific statistical methods had to be done to calculate median energy burdens in neighborhoods and validate with utility companies

- Would it make sense to also add heat illness/death data?
  - Yes, urban heat health information will be added to GEM

- Gail: I am familiar with Rosa Gonzalez's work on community engagement. How much change have you seen among your 65 cities in terms of centering in real terms the voices of those most impacted by extreme heat?
  - Philly good example of understanding heat vulnerable populations..2-year engagement w/ them…Covid-19 made it much more difficult to address heat vulnerability (ex: cooling centers)

- For more information on the GEM tool you can visit https://www.equitymap.org/frequently-asked-questions .

Discussion

- One limitation of census data is that it might not be representative of minority communities who are afraid to participate in the census. The community survey can help create a voice for the minority communities and fill in the data gaps.

- There should be partnerships with healthcare for using this mapping tool

- Suggestion to partner with senior living-based organizations since majority of indoor heat deaths are older and on fixed incomes

- Figuring out how to integrate MCDPH heat death, illness data with GEM tool.

    - Matt Cox: open to bringing in any critical equitable data points
    - Suggestion of data for food insecurity, education level, and health outcomes of children

Stacey Champion: What kind of direct community engagement is this group planning for the future? Concerned about boots on the ground people and workgroup member. Reminder to be mindful of keeping community voice to gear solutions.

Vjollca: we are working with 2 communities in South Phoenix. In the process of organizing a workshop on how to maintain cooling systems and maintain mobile homes. The workshop is on 10/23 for 40 people. FSL is helping to organize and host the workshop

Stacey Champion: Is it possible to broaden that idea?

- If the workshop goes well, implement it earlier in the cooling season next year during April.

- Community health workers trying to give education to their communities on energy insecurity

- Wrap-up (5 mins)

  - Next steps: Use link https://www.equitymap.org/how-to-access-gem to sign-up
    - Takes about 2-4 hours to gain access
    - Make use of Greenlink office hours

  - Continue discussion about solutions into next meeting
  - Next meeting to be 9/30 2:30-3:30 pm
    - Present MCDPH toolkit
    - Present energy insecurity webpage