

The National Association for the Dually Diagnosed  
Environmental Health Project  
Funded by the John Merck Fund

**The National Association for the Dually Diagnosed (NADD)**

NADD is a not-for-profit membership association established for professionals, care providers and families to enhance the understanding of, and services for, individuals who have intellectual disabilities and mental health needs.

The Mission of NADD is: To advance mental wellness for persons with developmental disabilities through the promotion of excellence in mental health care.

**Why the NADD Environmental Health Project:**

NADD is concerned with long term preventive approaches in order to promote mental wellness. Research has informed us that exposure to toxic agents in the environment can cause a host of developmental, neurological, and mental health problems. The NADD goal for the Environmental Health Project is to advance awareness about the exposure of toxic agents in the environment by providing professionals, caregivers, family members, and the general public with relevant information concerning toxic agents and their effects on neurodevelopmental disorders.

The prevalence of neurodevelopmental disorders is a cause for alarm. For example:

- As many as ten percent of children in the United States suffer from attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (American Journal of Public Health, February 2002)
- Fifteen percent or ten million children in the United States are affected by some form of learning disability (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 1985).
- Intellectual disability (formerly mental retardation) affects two percent or approximately 1.4 million children under the age of 18 (American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, formerly American Association on Mental Retardation, June 2002).
- A 2007 Centers for Disease Control report found that 1 in 150 children in America today have an autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

Research shows that environmental factors such as lead, mercury, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), alcohol, toluene, and tobacco smoke are capable of disrupting human brain development, resulting in permanent, negative impacts on intelligence, learning, attention, memory, comprehension, language acquisition, written and verbal communications, behavior, and socialization. The NADD

Environmental Health Project aims to educate NADD members and the general public about the health and developmental impact of these environmental factors.

**NADD's commitment:**

Environmental health has been added to the list of NADD's major content categories. The subject areas of our concern now include Environmental Health in addition to:

- Diagnosis and Assessment
- Research
- Counseling and Therapy
- Drug Therapy
- Program Models
- Residential Services
- Offenders
- Staff Training
- Social and Sexual Issues
- Syndromes
- Administration and Systems
- Aging

Environmental health issues are now a major content area and concern for NADD and therefore NADD uses a variety of vehicles to disseminate relevant environmental health information as it relates to neurodevelopment over the lifespan. These include:

- Dedicated website
- *The NADD Bulletin*
- Conference presentations
- Environmental Health Committee
- Teleconference Trainings
- Policy/Advocacy

**The NADD Environmental Health Website**

- The NADD Environmental Health Project website has been created, with its own URL ([www.envhealthproject.org](http://www.envhealthproject.org)) to improve visibility and simplify searches. This website is also accessible from the main NADD website ([www.thenadd.org](http://www.thenadd.org)).
- The Environmental Health Project website provides links to information about a number of environmental toxins, including dioxins, flame retardants, lead, mercury, pesticides, plastics, solvents, and toxic molds.
- The Environmental Health Project website provides links to research articles and to news about environmental health topics.
- The Environmental Health Project website provides information and links to other organizations involved in environmental health.
- The Environmental Health Project website provides information and links about events of interest to people concerned about environmental health.
- The environmental health articles that are published in *The NADD Bulletin* are also posted on the NADD Environmental Health Project website.
- In addition, links to other environmental health articles are provided.

## **Environmental health articles in *The NADD Bulletin***

*The NADD Bulletin* is published six times a year and is distributed to the NADD membership. NADD has had an environmental health article in each issue of *The NADD Bulletin* since the March/April 2007 issue and has increased the size of *The NADD Bulletin* from 20 to 24 pages in order to accommodate having an environmental health article in each issue. NADD is committed to having an environmental health article in each issue of *The NADD Bulletin*. The articles that have been printed are:

- “Children’s Environmental Health” by Elise Miller M.Ed., Executive Director, Institute for Children’s Environmental Health (ICEH)
- “Linking Environmental Exposures with Psychological Disorders” by Michele Gagnon, MPH; Elise Miller, M. Ed., Ted Schettler, M.D., MPH
- “Arsenic,” A Practice Prevention article prepared by the Institute for Children’s Environmental Health
- “Safe and Healthy Indoor Air is for Everyone!” by Laura Abulafia, MHS Director, Environmental Health Initiative, American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
- “Deceived, Disabled, Dejected, Dehumanized, Dismissed, and Dying: The Widespread Dilemma of MCS Disability” by Toni Temple, Founder and President, The Ohio Network for the Chemically Injured

## **Environmental health presentations at NADD conferences**

NADD includes sessions about environmental health at NADD conferences.

- The keynote address at the NADD Annual Conference was Ted Schettler, MD, MPH, speaking on “Neurological Development and the Environment: Challenges and Opportunities.”
- Also at the Annual Conference there was a session “The Learning and Developmental Disabilities Initiative: Preventing Toxic Threats to Neurodevelopment,” presented by Elise Miller, M.Ed. and Dr. Schettler.

NADD will continue to include Environmental Health among the topics included in its “Call for Presentations” for future conferences.

## **The NADD Environmental Health Committee**

NADD has established the NADD Environmental Health Committee. The purpose of the Committee is to provide advice and direction in meeting the goals and objectives of the NADD Environmental Health Project. The Committee is composed of researchers, academics, and environmental health advocates.

## **Teleconference Trainings**

At this time NADD has two teleconference trainings planned. Laura Abulafia, Director of the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Environmental Health Initiative speaking on “Developmental Disabilities and Environmental Toxicants: AAIDD’s Environmental Health Initiative” in December. Ms. Abulafia has agreed to do a second training in the Spring of 2008. We anticipate scheduling additional teleconference trainings in the future.

## **Policy Initiatives**

NADD is collaborating with other groups to address links between environmental exposure and neurodevelopmental problems including intellectual disability, mental health disorders, learning disabilities, and other health problems. For example:

1. NADD co-signed letters urging retailers and manufacturers to stop producing and selling baby bottles containing bisphenol A, which has been linked to cancers, developmental disabilities, early onset of puberty, and reproductive problems, among other serious health impacts.
2. NADD co-signed a letter to congressional leaders urging them to appropriate the necessary funds for the National Institutes of Health to fully support the National Children’s Study (WCS) to further understanding about how environmental factors contribute to premature births, childhood diseases, developmental delays, and learning disorders.
3. NADD is collaborating with other organizations that share a common concern about toxic agents in the environment and effects on human development. It is our collective object to have an impact on policy that will result in lower exposure to toxic agents affecting neurodevelopment.

## **Contact**

National Association for the Dually Diagnosed  
NADD  
132 Fair Street  
Kingston, New York 12401  
email: [info@thenadd.org](mailto:info@thenadd.org)  
phone: (800) 331-5362  
NADD website: [www.thenadd.org](http://www.thenadd.org)  
Environmental Health Project website: [www.envhealthproject.org](http://www.envhealthproject.org)