

## Northeastern IPM Center – IPM Partnership Grants – 2010 – Proposal Project Description

### **A. PD: Carol Westinghouse**

**Project Title: Vermont School IPM Project**

**Project Type: Minigrant**

### **B. Project Summary:**

1. Most Vermont schools do not have a functioning IPM policy. Research has shown that exposure to pesticides can cause serious health effects in children including cancer, birth defects, nervous system disorders, reproductive issues, immune disorders, asthma episodes, and hormone disruption.

This project aims to educate school stakeholders on the hazards of using pesticides, the benefits of a verifiable IPM program, steps to implementation and ways to identify a legitimate IPM service program.

To address this problem, Informed Green Solutions (IGS) Project Director will:

- Participate in the NE School IPM Workgroup
- Coordinate a group of Vermont school stakeholders for a VT IPM Workgroup to
  - identify mechanisms to educate school stakeholders
  - develop a priorities list to identify critical issues in current pest management
  - identify schools for pilot projects and participate in pilot projects
  - generate/identify materials needed to educate stakeholders
- Add key IPM components to Informed Green Solutions' existing Cleaning for Healthy Schools Products and Practices Evaluations and materials
- Coordinate with the Envision (VT's Tools for Schools) Program to expand enrollment in the program through collaboration. (This program includes adoption of an IPM policy for each school enrolling.)

2. A 2002 report by the Vermont Public Interest Research Group on school pesticide use found the following:

- 70% of schools reported that they use pesticides.
- Only 6% of these schools give prior notification to parents before they apply pesticides.
- 57% of schools reported using pesticides that are considered to be EPA category I or II pesticides – meaning that they are among the most toxic pesticides available. At a minimum this means that 32,800 students are at risk of being exposed to the most toxic pesticides at school.
- Just 23% of the schools are keeping written records of pesticide use.
- Only 7% of the schools have a written pesticide use policy.
- Most schools (73%) had not heard of integrated pest management (IPM) before this survey.

In Vermont, 8% or approximately 10,000 children suffer from asthma. With some of the highest childhood asthma rates in the country, it is critical that Vermont schools use effective and low-risk pest management practices. Studies have shown that IPM practices significantly reduce pesticide exposure risk and improve health (Landrigan et al. 1999). A study of schools showed that IPM practicing schools had little pesticide residues whereas conventionally treated schools had residues on baseboards and walls (Williams et al 2005).

Vermont has a Healthy Schools Program (Envision) based on the EPA's Tools for Schools that requires the adoption of an IPM program for certification. But because the Envision Program is voluntary with little funding, only 7% of schools have been certified. Schools are in need of support and technical assistance to enable them to adopt IPM practices.

School Facility Managers and Custodians many times use pesticides without understanding the environmental and human health impacts and without realizing they need to be a certified pesticide applicator. They also may not realize how simple building maintenance steps can help reduce the need for pesticides or that safer alternatives are available. Pest Control Service providers are not always aware of the susceptibility of children to the health effects of pesticides or that safer ways of managing pests are readily available. Children and other building occupants are being exposed to pesticides without any prior notification or the opportunity to take protective actions, exposing the school system to liability issues.

IGS Cleaning for Healthy Schools (CfHS) Program Manager has identified stakeholders representing the pest management industry, the School Boards Insurance Trust, the Envision program, the University of Vermont Extension Program, NGOs, the VT Department of Agriculture, school facilities managers and representatives of school nurses, teachers, and administrators. This group is eager to identify mechanisms to embed IPM in every school in the State.

3. School IPM was specifically identified in 3 of the 14 priority needs identified at the 2005 Northeast Community and Urban IPM Conference. Priorities of the NE IPM Center's NE School IPM Workgroup include conducting outreach to stakeholder groups, coordinating and piggybacking educational efforts with parallel efforts (Envision, Cleaning for Health), educating policy makers, providing demonstration projects and supporting state stakeholder groups.

This Project will help Vermont schools adopt IPM policies and practices and will be applicable to other regions through the integration of IPM content into a CfHS Format. The Project Director manages the Cleaning for Healthy Schools Program that provides educational materials and technical assistance to schools on implementation of a cleaning program that uses safer products and practices. Part of this program trains others who work in State asthma prevention and Tools for Schools programs across the Northeast. An IPM section will be incorporated into existing program materials and trainings.

Other funding has not been identified to support participation in the Workgroups or to complete the other identified tasks.

### *Objectives*

- 1) Establish and coordinate the VT School IPM Workgroup to share information, training, and resources to establish and support IPM programs in VT.
- 2) Conduct an IPM demonstration project at a school district where a school IPM program is lacking.
- 3) Integrate IPM concepts into existing CfHS materials that will be used across the region and provide technical assistance using these materials to schools.

*Anticipated Impacts* – Human and environmental health will be protected as schools adopt policies and practices to reduce the need for pesticides, especially high-risk pesticides. Communities will benefit from educational materials available in publications. Schools can save money by reducing routine use of pesticides to as needed use and through reduced liability risk. The project anticipates providing technical assistance on implementing an IPM program to a minimum of 10 school districts, delivering educational materials and presentations to a minimum of 5 stakeholder groups, providing the enhanced CfHS form to trainees from a minimum of 3 states and participating in 1 Pilot Project.

#### 4. Outcomes will be measured by:

1. The successful completion of a pilot project.
2. The number of schools provided with technical assistance and educational materials.
3. The number of schools who enroll in the Envision program (requires adopting an IPM program).
4. The number of Trainers/School Health programs across NE that add IPM to their Toolkits.
5. The number of stakeholder groups who attend presentations on IPM/Envision.

#### Work Plan

- Spring 2010 – Organize VT Workgroup and set up time for monthly meetings. Identify School District for Pilot Project and coordinate with NE School IPM Workgroup. Identify/create materials to add to the Cleaning for Healthy Schools Products and Practices Evaluation Form and School Toolkits.
- Summer 2010 and Ongoing
  - Begin using the Evaluation Form and distributing Toolkits. Enroll schools in the Envision Program.
- Fall 2010
  - Present information and materials at workshops/meetings/conferences.
- Winter 2010
  - Provide materials for stakeholder publications.
- Spring 2011
  - Wrap-up Project and write final report.
- Ongoing - Participate in NE School IPM Workgroup meetings and Pilot Project, coordinate monthly VT Workgroup meetings, visit and conduct evaluations at schools, engage with colleagues across the northeast on the projects and provide them with the materials.