

## What is the Community and Tribal Subcommittee?

The Community and Tribal Subcommittee (CTS) is a subcommittee of ATSDR's Board of Scientific Counselors (BSC). The subcommittee consists of 15 members. Currently, there are 4 voting members of the BSC and 11 special consultants who represent various community and tribal interests. The Assistant Administrator of ATSDR requested that the subcommittee be established to ensure that individual citizens would have a formalized method of providing input to the agency through the BSC. The subcommittee, through the BSC, provides ATSDR with recommendations concerning community and tribal community involvement practices, programs, and policies.

## Background

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry established the Board of Scientific Counselors in 1987, under the Federal Advisory Committee Act. In 1994, three community and tribal representatives were selected to serve as Special Consultants to the BSC.

A few years later, the BSC formed the Community and Tribal Subcommittee and increased the number of Special Consultants from 3 to 11 to widen the spectrum of representation from community and tribal members living near hazardous waste sites or affected by uncontrolled releases of hazardous substances in the environment. CTS meetings are held on a regular basis and in conjunction with meetings of the BSC.

## About ATSDR

ATSDR is directed by congressional mandate pursuant to the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act of 1980 (CERCLA, also known as Superfund) to perform specific functions concerning public health effects of exposure to uncontrolled releases of hazardous substances into the environment. These functions include public health assessments and public health consultations at hazardous waste sites, health surveillance and registries, response to emergency releases of hazardous substances, applied research in support of the agency's mission, information development and dissemination, and education and training concerning hazardous substances.

ATSDR is an agency in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The agency's mission is to serve the public by using the best science, taking responsive public health actions, and providing trusted health information to prevent harmful exposures and disease related to toxic substances.

## Accomplishments

Recommendations by the CTS subcommittee have resulted in the following accomplishments.

- A formal Office of Tribal Affairs was established at ATSDR.
- Health-based technical assistant grants are now included in EPA's Superfund Technical Assistant Grant Program.
- A videotape on cultural sensitivity was produced to aid in training agency staff and others.
- There are ongoing discussions concerning ways to improve health assessments and ways that ATSDR can better assist communities affected by federal facility sites.
- Meetings are occasionally held in locations other than Atlanta (to facilitate broader public participation).

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## How to Participate

Special Consultants serve a 4-year term on the subcommittee. As positions become vacant, ATSDR searches for replacements. Any person who lives in a community affected by a hazardous waste site or who represents a group that works at local, regional, or national locations with affected communities can be considered for serving as a Special Consultant to the CTS. The Federal Register will publish a notice when vacancies occur, along with an application form. You may also request an application from Ruby Palmer, who is the Designated Federal Official for the CTS.

## For Further Information

### Contact

Ruby Palmer of ATSDR  
Designated Federal Official for the CTS

You may reach her by calling ATSDR's toll-free number, 1-888-422-8737. Please call between 9 AM and 5 PM, Eastern Standard Time, Monday through Friday, and ask for Ruby Palmer.

You may also contact her by e-mail at [rlp3@cdc.gov](mailto:rlp3@cdc.gov) or by fax at 404-498-1744.

To correspond by mail, write to Ruby Palmer at the following address.

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