

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
National Institutes of Health
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY



March 9, 2012

To: National Children's Study Vanguard Study Contract Field Staff

From: Director, National Children's Study

Subject: National Children's Study Transitions

I am writing to inform you of some upcoming changes in the National Children's Study.

Important parts of the National Children's Study are learning from and about families and communities across the country, making it truly a national effort. We began one part of the National Children's Study in 2009, called the Vanguard Study. The Vanguard Study is an early, or pilot, phase of the National Children's Study that is active across the United States and will continue for 21 years. Initially, we used a door-to-door recruitment method and soon learned that we could improve the process. We have designed and tested alternate recruitment methods that are more efficient and economical, yet maintain a national scope to the Study. All locations for the Vanguard Study have been identified and no new locations will be added. We plan to continue activity for all Vanguard Study participants and their communities until Study completion more than two decades from now.

A larger Main Study with the goal of enrolling about 100,000 children from across the United States has yet to begin. The Vanguard Study and the Main Study will continue in parallel with the Vanguard Study finishing ahead of the Main Study.

Using an orderly process to develop the Study is important because we are funded by Congress on a year-to-year basis and must demonstrate careful use of resources to maximize the value of the project in order to continue for the next couple of decades.

The National Children's Study uses a contract mechanism to gather information. You have been working with a local contractor for National Children's Study associated activities. Contractors were selected on a competitive basis to carry out the day-to-day work of the Study in each location for a specific period of time. All federal cost reimbursement contracts have specific clauses that limit funding and restrict work to specific periods of performance. At the end of the period of performance, a new contract must be competed and awarded to continue any additional work.

Two changes are coming in the next year to year and a half.

The first is that the current round of contracts for field work for the National Children's Study begins to expire this spring and different contracts will expire over the course of the coming year and a half. At the same time we will be announcing new contract opportunities utilizing a full and open competition.

While the contractor currently serving the location where you have been fielding the Study is eligible to compete for the new contracts, because the process is open to all qualified contractors, the federal government may award the new contract to a different contractor. If a new contractor is selected for the location where you work, we will work with both the prior and the new contractor to ensure an orderly transition to maintain the National Children's Study in your location.

The second change involves the locations for the Main Study, which is currently scheduled to begin initial activities sometime in 2013. Several years ago, the National Center for Health Statistics used a random selection process to identify 100 of the approximately 3,000 counties in the United States as potential Study locations. Since then, we have been learning much about conducting a large-scale national study and have concluded that we may have to revise the location selection process so that we can improve the recruitment of participants for the Main Study. If we do revise the process, the location where you have been fielding the Study may, or may not, be included in any revision to the Main Study plan. If your location is already participating in the Vanguard Study, then your location will continue to participate in the Vanguard Study for the duration of the Study. At this time, it is impossible to predict what the outcome of the Main Study selection process will be and we will not know for possibly another year. In the meantime, be assured that we recognize your willingness and commitment to engage with future National Children's Study efforts.

The National Children's Study is a large, complex operation that many people will contribute to over the course of the Study and all contributions are important and significant. All efforts have value and impact in ways that, in some cases, may be immediately apparent, but may also have value that appears sometime later.

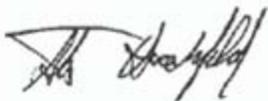
We at the National Children's Study Program Office wish to assure you that due to the specific contributions you made to date for the Vanguard Study, your work will find its way into future Study content and process. Thus, the Study benefits and becomes a better Study by building on what you and your colleagues have contributed to date, and will continue to contribute.

We also hope that no matter what level of participation you may have in the National Children's Study, even as an observer, you will remain interested and willing to continue to receive information on what is a major and, we believe, exciting and informative study.

If you have any further comments or questions, feel free to contact us through the NCS mailbox: ncs@mail.nih.gov.

Thank you again for your support and involvement.

Respectfully,



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