

## U.S.-CANADA REPORT SHOWS PARTICULATE HEALTH DANGERS, ACID RAIN PROGRESS

### From Environmental Protection Agency

■(WASHINGTON) The United States and Canada recently jointly released their third biennial Progress Report on acid rain and other air quality issues under the 1991 United States/Canada Bilateral Air Quality Agreement. The report contains the first five-year review of the Agreement to determine its effectiveness in addressing transboundary air pollution.

Since the last progress report, health effects studies indicate that acidic aerosols and

other types of particulate matter have adverse health effects in both countries. Both governments also report substantial progress in reducing emissions and effects of acid rain.

The 110 biggest sulfur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>)-emitting power plants and other utilities in the United States were in compliance with the acid rain reduction requirements of the 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments in 1995, the first year of the program (SO<sub>2</sub> is one of the prime ingredients in the formation of acid rain). SO<sub>2</sub> emissions in this country also

declined sharply in 1995, decreasing to 5.3 millions tons annually from 1980 levels of 10.9 million tons (a 51 percent decline). The 1995 SO<sub>2</sub> levels were 3.4 million tons better than required under the Clean Air Act.

The report cites studies showing reduction in surface water sulfates, leading to water quality improvement in the northeastern United States and Canada, as well as a decrease in lake nitrate concentrations in the Adirondacks; however, the report cites other studies indicating that nitrogen deposition at current levels could reduce the benefits of acid rain reduction in the long term.

In addition, the study finds no evidence of widespread forest decline from acid deposition, with some exceptions in some especially sensitive regions.

The five-year review of the Air Quality Agreement in the report concludes that, overall, both governments have been successful in fulfilling their obligations under the pact, particularly regarding acid rain control. The Air Quality Agreement, signed by the United States and Canada in March 1991, was established to address transboundary air pollution issues between the two countries.

For further technical information, contact Rosemary Wolfe of EPA's Acid Rain Division at 202-233-9176. For copies of "The 1996 United States-Canada Air Quality Agreement Progress Report," call the Acid Rain Hotline at 202-233-9620.

## FIRST STEP STOPPED IN COMMITTEE

By Gerry Cherry  
Staff Writer

■(GIT) The Oklahoma legislature had the opportunity to establish a coordinating body for Medicaid services to children, in the 45th session. Reps. Sean Voskuhl, D-Marshall, and Laura Boyd, D-Norman, authored a bill to create the Family Centered and Community Designed Services Act. Penny Williams, D-Tulsa, was the Senate author of HB2231.

The bill called for community services to take care of everything from child abuse prevention to literacy, through family resource centers, voluntary home visitation, case management, wrap-around services and co-location of services. A "local management team" would be the locally appointed body responsible for the design and implementation of a local service system.

Under a section of new law, the bill identified the most frequent problems for families seeking or receiving services as: difficulty identifying appropriate service providers; completing multiple applications; "confusing and occasionally contradictory duplications" in delivery of services when services are received through more than one agency or service provider and, "delivery of services available," rather than "delivery of services based on needs of child or family." Ten state agencies were named as responsible for implementation of the requirements of the act.

The bill passed both houses of the legislature in the first session, Juvenile Justice Planner Grace Kelley said Tuesday, then was vetoed by Governor Keating. HB2231, introduced during the 1996 session, was given a do-pass recommendation and sent to committee where it died.

With the new draft, the Commission anticipates another bill will be introduced in the 46th Oklahoma legislature.

State agency heads have until Nov. 12 to suggest changes in the draft plan for Medic-

aid funds distribution submitted to the NeedsMet Committee of the Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth, last month. The plan was drawn up by the Institute of Health Services Management of Bethesda, MD.

Among other changes, the plan calls for:

- collaborative state agency efforts to move funding for children and youth closer to the local level;
- eliminating duplication and fragmentation of services to clients; and
- establishing a state clearinghouse for all services to children and youth.

Ken Lackey, executive director of Juvenile Affairs and Secretary of Health in Governor Keating's cabinet, said "Oklahoma isn't organized to coordinate resources in the manner suggested."

Because of fragmentation at the local level, Lackey said, "many families receive benefits from more than one agency. The key," Lackey said, "is involving local entities and coordinating resources."

One of the stumbling blocks to implementation of the plan, as explained by IHSM, is, "The structure appears to work against the concept of interagency collaboration. Hence, agency staff run their own service systems with little collaboration across systems, or recognition of how collaboration at the local level might more efficiently and effectively serve children and families.

It was recommended that "All interagency planning and collaboration efforts should be coordinated through a single body... which should spearhead the planning process for each interagency effort."

"Oklahoma should encourage local planning, collaboration and integration efforts through flexible funding for children and families, rather than categorical funding tied to specific program models," the report from IHSM recommended.

