

## **National Institutes of Health Awards Tulane University \$14.9 Million to Participate in National Children's Study**

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anead@tulane.edu  
(504) 247-1443

Tulane University has been awarded a \$14.9 million, five-year grant to participate in the National Institutes of Health's (NIH's) comprehensive study on the interaction of genes and the environment on children's health.

At an 11 a.m. EDT briefing Friday, Oct. 3, in Washington, D.C., NIH officials named Tulane University as one of 36 study centers which will recruit volunteers from a total of 72 locations. When it is fully operational, the study is expected to include from 36 to 50 centers in 105 study locations throughout the United States.

The Tulane team will recruit women who are likely to become pregnant from Orleans Parish. The team will provide clinical exams for this study group, collecting biological and environmental samples and compile statistical information for study analyses investigating how genetic and environmental factors influence health and disease in children.

"The National Children's Study will be the largest long-term study of environmental and genetic effects on children's health ever conducted in the United States," says Dr. LuAnn White, professor of Environmental Health Sciences at Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine and director of the Tulane Center for Applied Environmental Public Health.

The National Children's Study will follow a representative national sample of 100,000 children from before birth to age 21. Study volunteers will be recruited throughout the United States, from rural, urban, and suburban areas, from all income and educational levels, and from all racial groups. The study will investigate factors influencing the development of such conditions as autism, cerebral palsy, learning disabilities, birth defects, diabetes, asthma, and obesity.

Authorized by Congress in the Children's Health Act of 2000, the National Children's Study is being conducted by a consortium of federal agencies. This includes two NIH institutes, the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Tulane is joined in this study by several partners: Battelle Center for Public Health Research and Evaluation, Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center's Department of Obstetrics/Gynecology, the Louisiana Public Health Institute and the Louisiana Office of Public Health. Tulane will also partner with Tulane Medical Center and Ochsner, Touro, East Jefferson and University hospitals, as well as numerous local physicians.

NIH officials stated that the study would yield health information throughout its 25-year span. Within just a few years, the study will provide information on disorders of pregnancy and birth. Since women would be recruited before they give birth, and in some instances even before they become pregnant, the study would provide insight into the causes and contributors of preterm birth.

More than 500,000 premature infants are born each year in the United States. Infants born prematurely are at risk for early death and a variety of health problems, such as cerebral palsy, mental retardation, and learning disabilities. Health care costs for preterm infants total \$26 billion per year.

Additional information about the National Children's Study is available from <http://www.nationalchildrensstudy.gov>.