
10. Multiple Chemical Sensitivity

- Objective:
- To promote understanding of the range of individual exposures and sensitivities to chemicals.
 - To examine the legal obligations of public institutions or employers to accommodate chemically-sensitive individuals.

Activities:

- Read some background materials on the condition known as multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS) or environmental illness (EI).
- Discuss causes and symptoms of the condition, and the estimated number of people who may be affected.
- Try to locate a chemically sensitive individual who could make a presentation to your class or who can be interviewed by phone or in person. Be aware that such a person may need many special precautions taken to ensure that they are not exposed to chemicals in your school.
- This project can be extended to examine the legal obligations of entities such as school districts to accommodate chemically-sensitive individuals (e.g., students or teachers). Write a position paper discussing whether and how a school could/should accommodate such an individual.

Background Materials:

- Hilleman, B. 1991. Multiple Chemical Sensitivity: Controversy intensifies over this puzzling syndrome. *Chemical and Engineering News* (July 22):26-42.
- Browder, S. 1992. Are You Allergic to the Modern World? *Woman's Day* (April 1):56,102.
- Weisskopf, M. 1990. Hypersensitivity to Chemicals Called Rising Health Problem. *The Washington Post* (February 10).
- Halbrook, D. 1992. Life is Killing Bethena Hareld. *American Legion Magazine*. (January):34-35, 72-74.
- Stimson, E. 1991. The Poisoning of Ruth Ann Barrell. *Presbyterian Survey*. (October):27-29.
- Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C. §12132).
- Walsh, M. 1992. Suits Spurring Courts to Rethink Schools' Liability to Protect Students From Harm. *Education Week* (December 2). Vol. XII(13):1,10.
- Kaswan, A. 1993. The Americans With Disabilities Act As A Weapon Against Indoor Air Pollution. *Environmental Law In New York* Vol. 4(7-8) (2-part series on obligations of employers).

The above articles are available from the Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides (NCAP), PO Box 1393, Eugene, OR 97440; (541) 344-5044.

Many newer articles and books can be found by researching multiple chemical sensitivity on the Web. Try <http://www.mcsurvivors.com> or one of the Web sites listed below as starting places.

Resource Groups:

- MCS Referral and Resources Service, 2326 Pickwick Rd., Baltimore, MD 21207. (410) 448-3319. Web site is <http://www.mcsrr.org/>.
- The Environmental Health Network, PO Box 1155, Larkspur, CA 94977. (Publishes *The New Reactor* newsletter, Web site is <http://users.lanminds.com/~wilworks/ehnindex.htm>).
- You can also try to contact local MCS support groups. Try your phone directory, or asking at a local naturopath or natural foods/nutritional supply store.