



PESTICIDES AND LEARNING DISABILITIES

Nearly 12 million children (17%) in the United States under age 18 suffer from one or more learning, developmental, or behavioral disabilities.¹ Learning disabilities alone may affect approximately 5-10% of children in public schools, and **the number of children with learning disabilities has increased a startling 191% between 1977 and 1994.**² Meanwhile, we know that children across the state are regularly exposed to pesticides that are neurotoxicants or developmental toxicants.

Exposure to pesticides may lead to:

- Impairment of short-term memory
- Slower psychomotor and reaction speed
- Emotional instability, more frequent instances of anxiety, irritability, and depression
- Personality disorders or changes, mood changes
- Shortened attention spans, associated with ADHD (Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder), which affects 3 to 6% of all school children
- Delays in physical stamina and hand-eye coordination
- Decreased number of brain cells and neurotransmitter receptors with exposure during critical points of development, that lead to significant IQ deficits and reading impairments
- Incomplete development of the fetal brain³

The US National Academy of Sciences estimates that at least 25% of learning and behavioral disabilities are due to either known toxic substances or the interactions between environmental factors and genetic predispositions.⁴ According to “In Harm’s Way,” a report by Greater Boston Physicians for Social Responsibility, chemical exposures are important and preventable contributors to these conditions.

Unfortunately, use of neurotoxic pesticides in California's schools is widespread.

In “Learning Curve,” CALPIRG's 2002 report which surveyed the fifteen largest school districts in California following passage of the Healthy Schools Act, 73% of school districts planned to use pesticide that are nervous system toxicants.⁵

Pesticides are a preventable source of exposure to neurotoxic chemicals.

Several school districts, including Los Angeles Unified and San Francisco Unified, have already stopped using neurotoxic pesticides, and are managing pests effectively through alternative methods such as least-toxic Integrated Pest Management.

What does AB 1006 do?

AB 1006 (Chu) will protect the health of children, teachers, and school staff by banning the use of the most highly toxic pesticides in schools, including pesticides that are neurotoxicants and developmental toxicants.

Call 888-CPR-4880 or visit www.calhealthyschools.org to get involved.

¹Learning Disabilities Association, http://www.ldawa.org/articles_2_bot.asp

²Schettler, T, J Stein, F Reich, and M Valenti. 2000. *In Harm's Way: Toxic threats to child development*. A report by Greater Boston Physicians for Social Responsibility.

³See note 2 above.

⁴<http://www.ourstolenfuture.org/NewScience/human/2000-09netreport.htm>

⁵McKendry, C., *Learning Curve: Charting Progress on Pesticide Use and the Healthy Schools Act*, CALPIRG and Californians for Pesticide Reform, 2002.