

A new study of the health of children in the United States is about to begin. Unprecedented in its expansiveness and scope, one of its principal investigators is Virginia Rauh, ScD, MSW, a member of the Heilbrunn Department of Population and Family Health.

Known as the National Children's Study, this endeavor will involve 100,000 families across the nation over a 21-year period.

As Deputy Director of the Columbia Center for Children's Environmental Health, Virginia has been involved in the National Children's Study from the start, working in many capacities ranging from the design of the study to serving on its national steering committee. The study itself is based on the belief that growing up healthy is every child's right. Of course, advances have been made in the U.S. in improving child health and development. Yet, at the same time, rates of asthma are increasing among children, as are obesity, diabetes, and other health issues. The purpose of the study is to determine the root cause of these preventable diseases.

## VIRGINIA RAUH

Assessing the Health of Our Nation's Children.

With Queens selected as one of the test sites for the study, which will begin in 2008, a consortium has been formed among prominent leaders in children's health from institutions including the Mount Sinai School of Medicine, Columbia University, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and the University of Medicine & Dentistry of New Jersey. Virginia is the Co-Principal Investigator for the Columbia component of the Queens Vanguard Center and will be Principal Investigator for the future Manhattan site.

Virginia believes her collaborative experience, essential to her work in the Heilbrunn Department, has been particularly beneficial in the work she has done on the study to date. Additionally, she looks forward to the fact that the study will ultimately provide information on the impact of environmental exposures on the growth and development of children. This study is large enough that it will not only supply data regarding the link between the physical environment and children's health, but will also permit examination of the moderating role of genetics and social environments in the health of our nation's youth.

Virginia's work with the National Children's Study serves as an example of the leadership and far-reaching influence of the Heilbrunn Department in the world of family health.