Columbia's Mailman School of Public Health recently announced the creation of its new National Center for Disaster Preparedness and named Irwin Redlener, a leading child advocate and pediatrician, as its first director. Redlener joins the Mailman School of Public Health as associate dean for Public Health Advocacy and Disaster Preparedness. He will lead the new center while continuing as president of The Children's Health Fund, a national organization devoted to providing healthcare to medically underserved children, which he founded in 1987. Redlener leaves Montefiore Medical Center, where he has served as associate dean for the development of one of the most advanced children's hospitals in the world.

The new Center, an expansion of Columbia's current disaster preparedness efforts will serve as a national resource and training ground for communities and public health emergency preparedness. It will develop protocols for the diagnosis of and response to bioterrorism, with public policy recommendations as a key area of focus. Along those lines, the Center, under Redlener's direction, will soon release a report on the readiness of the pediatric public health community to deal with bioterrorism.

The Center will also work with medical facilities to establish guidelines and costs for achieving high levels of preparedness. The Center will help define preparedness; identify and provide for the needs of communities, organizations, and children; and establish guidelines for communication to the public. In addition, the Center will identify and prepare appropriate strategies to meet the emerging aspects of preparedness and response to terrorism and development training curricula for public health officials.

Since September 11, 2001, Redlener has focused on one of the country's leading authorities on terrorism and disaster preparedness with a particular emphasis on the needs of children and families. He has worked to bring first to attention the special vulnerabilities of children to biological and chemical agents, outlining recommendations and urging legislators to strengthen the public health system to include provisions for children. These recommendations helped to serve as an impetus for children's provisions that were incorporated into a bioterrorism bill signed by President Bush in June 2002. In February 2003, Redlener convened a coalition of experts from government agencies, professional organizations, emergency medicine, and other specialties to analyze existing data on the needs of children in disaster planning, preparation, and response at the federal, state, and local levels. The center will develop consensus recommendations about pediatric preparedness.

"Irwin Redlener will provide extraordinary leadership in the new National Center for Disaster Preparedness," said Allan Rosenfeld, dean of the Mailman School. "The Center provides him and his colleagues an outstanding opportunity to further their goals of helping children and families handle disasters while also serving as a resource to the nation, its first responders, healthcare and public officials for crisis information and education. His passion and commitment to public health and the underserved make him the ideal person to play a leadership role at the School in preparedness for the region and the nation.

"The other challenge we face is to make sure that we stay focused on the traditional public health agenda, including access to health care for everyone, preventing tobacco-related illness, dealing with global concerns of HIV/AIDS, environmental problems, and other problems," he added.

The Mailman School currently leads several initiatives in disaster preparedness. Faculty, students, and staff at the School have developed a needs assessment of mental health issues affecting New York City's school population related to the World Trade Center disaster. Other initiatives at the School are study- ing NYC schoolchildren suffering from mental health disorders, and identifying children with high need for September 11-related mental health services. The School's researchers are assessing the effects of airborne pollutants on the health of women and their babies who were in the vicinity of the World Trade Center disaster. The School's Center for Public Health Preparedness, whose many programs will continue under the national center, is examining the factors associated with the evacuation of the World Trade Center.

"These are extraordinary times for public health. Clearly we need to make sure that we are fully prepared for disasters in general and for the terrible potential of more terrorism, a critical challenge in these times of shrinking resources and extra-

ordinary threats. The new Center will be a resource on many critical aspects of preparedness for the region and the nation," Redlener said.

Redlener has also been named a fellow of the American Philosophical Society, one of the world's oldest learned societies in the United States. The American Philosophical Society is the oldest learned society in the United States, organized for the promotion of scientific and scholarly inquiry.