

City of Milwaukee Health Department, Division of Home Environmental Health
2008 Milwaukee Healthy Homes Demonstration Project
Abstract

The purpose of the Milwaukee Healthy Homes Demonstration Project (MHHDP) is to develop, demonstrate and promote low-cost interventions in the home environment that result in decreasing indoor asthma triggers and asthma exacerbation in children. This project will serve 120 families with asthmatic children in high-risk areas and provide immediate benefits from education and low-cost home treatments in reducing indoor allergen triggers. It will invest in sustainability by incorporating community input and involvement in the entire project. It will assist in creating long-term outcomes of decreased emergency room visits, fewer school days missed and improved quality of life for children and their families.

This proposed project was developed with significant input and shared experience of several partners, and builds upon a comprehensive childhood lead poisoning prevention program at the City of Milwaukee Health Department (MHD). Fight Asthma Milwaukee Allies, the Dominican Center for Women, the Medical College of Wisconsin and the Safe Kids Coalition of South East Wisconsin will collaborate to create home environments that are healthier for children under six years of age.

In 2005, the hospital admissions rate was 137.3 per 10,000 and the emergency department visit rate was 1698.6 per 10,000 for children 4 years of age and younger and the rate for children 5-14 years of age was 46.6 per 10,000 and the emergency department visit rate was 243.3 per 10,000. In order to make a measurable impact within a three-year timeframe, as well as support a community-driven model for housing remediation, efforts of the MHHDP will concentrate in the area with highest prevalence of childhood lead poisoning and greatest burden of pediatric asthma. The highest number of emergency department visits (43 per 10,000) and the second highest number of inpatient stays (53) in 2007 occurred in the specific MHHDP target area.

While the overall prevalence rate for lead poisoning city-wide is 5.9%, in the specific MHHDP target area, the current lead poisoning prevalence rate is 17.5% among children tested.

Methods used in this project will include a community-driven approach. The MHHDP will bridge the gap between existing community outreach efforts and the MHD to build a collaborative effort for home environmental health. Community-level strategies will assure resources, skills and tools to implement healthy housing changes are appropriately directed. Door-to-door and grassroots community networking strategies will assure identification of families and properties appropriate for this intervention. The trust that comes with community networks will secure greater commitment from otherwise disenfranchised families. An additional 425 families will be reached through broad community awareness events.

Combined efforts to unite the community, build leaders, and reach neighbors to provide education and awareness is but one component. Community partners will take the lead in screening and preparing families for the interventions. A team approach to home intervention (CBO, MHD, family) will include an intensive low-cost asthma trigger reduction session with hands-on instruction, decontamination and Integrated Pest Management and minor home repair activities. Property owners will be engaged to conduct repairs that support asthma trigger reduction. Lead hazard control subsidies will be utilized to

secure the buy-in of the property owner. Follow up efforts and incentives will be timed to increase retention of families in the project. Environmental sampling results used as educational tools and presented to family members to promote sustained preventive behaviors as well as measure the efficacy of low-cost approach to allergen reductions.