



A Collaboration to Tackle Asthma January 2008

The Healthy Residents, Healthy Homes Coalition is a groundbreaking collaboration dedicated to reducing the burden that asthma places on families and individuals living at the Newport Housing Authority through coordinated health, housing and social service responses. The coalition includes the Newport Housing Authority, local health and social service providers, state health officials and regional organizations.

The Need and Initial Actions

In 2005, Jim Reed, Executive Director of the Newport Housing Authority (NHA) became concerned about the use of emergency medical care by Housing Authority residents and a potential increase in asthma among residents. In response, NHA undertook a series of activities to improve the health of residents that included holding a community health fair and convening a committee to explore strategies to characterize asthma rates among the population and take steps to address the problem. The original committee included representatives from a wide range of organizations: NHA, RI Department of Health, Newport Healthy Communities Initiative - a project of East Bay Community Action Program, Hasbro Children's Hospital, Neighborhood Health Plan of RI, American Lung Association of RI (ALARI), Asthma Regional Council of New England (ARC), and Brown University. The committee named the initiative the Healthy Residents, Healthy Homes (HRHH) Coalition and decided that a critical first step would be to undertake a survey to document asthma rates, asthma triggers and related issues. The group felt this information was essential to define the health issues and next steps.

Core Program Activities

Over the first two years, the HRHH Coalition undertook several core activities. Start-up activities were funded by the RI Department of Health and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Develop and Administer Baseline Asthma Survey The HRHH Coalition met monthly beginning in 2006 to set priorities and begin work. The Coalition, with substantial support from RI Department of Health, Brown University, ALARI, and ARC's Senior Advisor Tohn Environmental Strategies, conducted a baseline survey to document asthma rates, environmental triggers linked to asthma, smoking rates, and access to health care services to better understand the nature of these conditions.

Provide Healthy Housing Training for Housing Authority Staff The HRHH Coalition sponsored a half-day training for all Newport Housing Authority staff on the environmental triggers linked to asthma. The training, provided by ARC's Senior Advisor Tohn Environmental Strategies, culminated in a brainstorming session to identify ways the staff could intervene to reduce such triggers that include: moisture, mold, mice, cockroaches, dust mites, and environmental tobacco smoke.

Secure Newport Housing Authority Board Adoption of a Healthy Housing Resolution The resolution confirmed the Housing Authority's commitment at the highest levels of governance to develop and implement a program that addresses the needs of our population in conjunction with its Healthy Housing Program. "A committee shall be established to develop sound housing practices that ensure and promote healthy homes and understand asthma's impact, processes and procedures to connect our population to a medical home team, collect data and conduct outreach through surveys, questionnaires and events, engage residents and staff in training and education."

Develop and Seek Funding for Healthy Homes Response Teams The baseline survey documented that a substantial portion of the housing units were occupied by at least one person with asthma and that moisture/mold conditions and environmental tobacco smoke appeared to be the most common environmental triggers. The survey also demonstrated that many residents did not have a regular place to go for routine

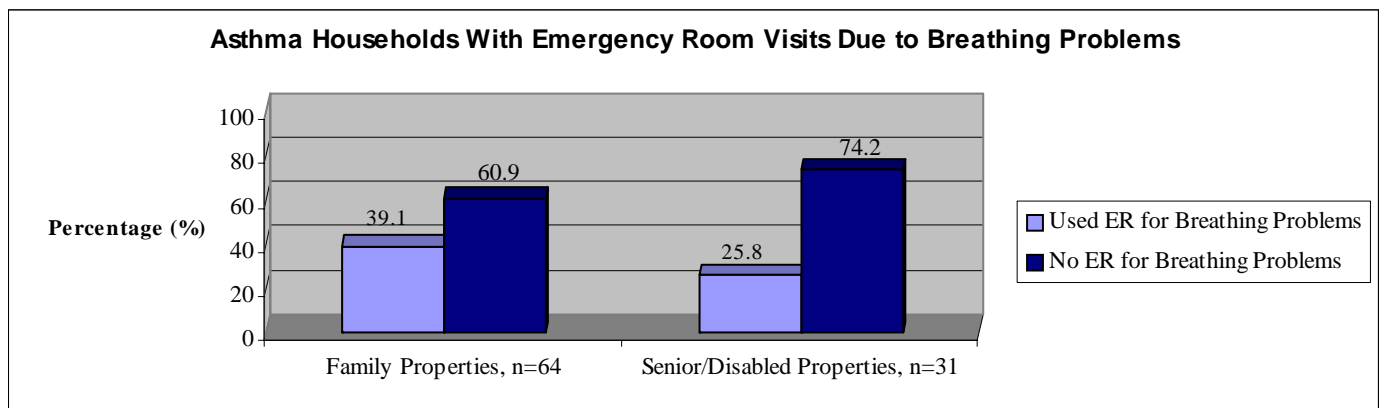
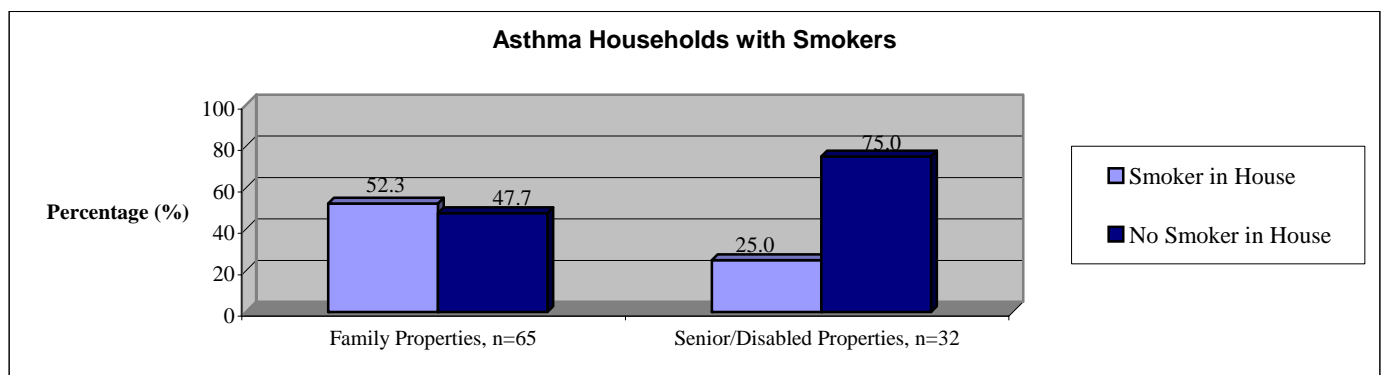
medical care and that in nearly 25% of the units at least one person did not have health insurance in the past year. Additional results are described below. The results provided critical information to enable the HRHH Coalition to design and secure funding for a "Healthy Homes Response Team". Funding continued from the RI Department of Health and CDC; additional funds were secured from the US EPA's Region 1, the U.S. Agency for Health Care Research and Quality (AHRQ), and the RI Parent Information Network.

Baseline Survey Results

~ One third of survey respondents (n=99) indicated that at least one or more adult or child in the home has asthma.

~ When looking only at **family units** (n=68) in which someone has asthma, the following was reported:

- 39% had someone in the household that visited the emergency room for breathing problems in the last 12 months
- 52% had a smoker in the home
- 11% did not have a place to go for routine health care
- 41% had someone in their household that did not have health insurance at some time during the last 12 months
- 48% had mold or musty smell in the home



Create Healthy Homes Response Teams To Visit Asthmatic Residents With a better understanding of resident asthma, key environmental triggers and health care utilization, the Coalition put in place a unique Healthy Homes Response Team to visit housing units occupied by residents with asthma to further document environmental triggers that could be repaired as well as learn more about the residents' need for health care and related services. The core activities were:

- Hire a parent consultant through RI Parent Information Network to coordinate the HRHH Response Team, complete family/unit assessments and follow up action plan, and act as a liaison between the coalition and families.
- Develop [protocols](#) to target units with a resident who has one or more other risk factors: environmental trigger, no regular medical home or health insurance, and/or resident smoker.

- Provide [training to Response Team](#) staff enabling them to: assess units for environmental triggers, speak with residents about access for health care and insurance, document the resident use of asthma medication, and explore other issues related to managing asthma.
- Undertake home [unit assessments](#) and use the results to initiate: housing repairs and a [family action plan](#) to reduce asthma triggers and improve linkages for social service responses (e.g., connect residents to health care and/or medical care, assist families in advocating for their asthmatic children within the school system).
- Develop and use an [evaluation tool](#) and [database](#) to measure changes in asthma symptoms, environmental and housing conditions, health care utilization, smoking cessation activities, repair costs, and other activities spurred by the program.

Initial Response Team Assessments Spur Responses During the first seven months of Response Team activities, the team has contacted 50 families and completed 31 assessments. These visits resulted in over 130 family action goals and over 100 maintenance requests. The most frequently identified family goals were: improve pest control and cleaning, recommend asthma education, and schedule an appointment with medical doctor for reevaluation. A substantial number of residents were also interested in smoking cessation services. The Response Team initiated 104 maintenance goals. Mold and moisture issues were the most common problem with 50% of all repairs involving moisture problems.

HRHH Tool Kit Available to Others

A goal of this innovative effort is to share the approach, materials and lessons learned with others. The HRHH Coalition, in conjunction with the RI Department of Health and AHRQ plan to make available an electronic tool kit in 2008. . AHRQ Learning Partnership to Decrease Disparities in Pediatric Asthma funded the protocol, evaluation and database, and communication materials. The protocol, evaluation, and database were developed by Tohn Environmental Strategies, LLC (www.tohnenvironmental.com) and subcontractors: Chris Camillo, The National Center for Healthy Housing, and Susan Pinherio. The communication materials -- HRHH Brochure and Action Item Worksheet for Residents -- were developed by Pablo Rodriguez-Masjoan, Art2Create (art2create@mac.com). The core program materials are listed below and available for others to use:

- HRHH Program Protocols
- Newport HRHH Baseline Asthma Survey
- Newport Baseline Survey Results
- Lessons Learned From the Newport HRHH Baseline Survey
- Model Baseline Asthma Survey (Streamlined To Reflect Lessons Learned)
- HRHH Training Materials (Handouts and PowerPoint Slides)
- Unit Assessment Forms (Baseline and Follow Up)
- Family Action Plans and Notes Form
- Evaluation Tools (Summary , Access Data Base, Model Reports)
- HRHH Brochure
- HRHH Action Item Worksheet for Residents

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