



# Preventing Asthma Among Inner-City Boston Youth: *Can a Community-based Program Decrease the Effects of Asthma and Improve Quality of Life?*

## Issue

Asthma is a significant health problem among children. Asthma accounts for over 2.2 million pediatrician visits and 28 million days of restricted activity each year. The onset and persistence of asthma can be associated with a variety of environmental factors, including exposure to viral respiratory illnesses, active or passive cigarette smoke, and a variety of household allergens. Common sources of allergens include house dust, mites, dogs, cockroaches, and rats. In inner-city neighborhoods, increased levels of allergen exposure may work in combination with larger family size, poor housing quality, and increased mold and dampness to influence the development and severity of asthma. In Boston's inner-city, the hospitalization rate for asthma is nearly five times higher than in other areas of Massachusetts.

**“Some of the most vulnerable of our citizens, children in the poorest neighborhoods of our large cities, suffer disproportionately from asthma.”**

Anthony S. Fauci, M.D.  
Director, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease

## Response

A team of researchers from the Harvard School of Public Health and the Dimock Community Health Center are collaborating on a community-based research project to assess the impact of a multi-faceted program designed to reduce the effects of asthma among residents of multi-unit housing developments in inner-city Boston. Components of the program will include information on asthma triggers, air quality testing, provision of mitigation supplies (e.g., vacuum cleaners and insect control products), and ongoing education about asthma.

The specific aims of the project include:

- Assessing the impact of the program on resident's knowledge and behavior related to asthma;
- Determining the extent to which the program can improve the environmental quality of multi-unit housing developments;
- Assessing the impact of the program on asthma-related emergency room visits, hospitalizations, and medical costs; and
- Determining the extent to which the program positively influences quality of life.

This project will yield valuable information regarding the extent to which an asthma prevention program can be used to decrease asthma-related illness and improve quality of life among inner-city residents.

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## More Information

For more information about this research project, contact David B. Connell, Ph.D., Director of Research, Dimock Community Health Center, 55 Dimock Street, Roxbury (Boston), MA 02119  
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This research grant is funded through the second round of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Extramural Prevention Research Program (EPRP). The EPRP is committed to funding prevention research that has direct relevance for policy and practice by having researchers invite health professionals and communities to participate in the research process - including identifying research questions of importance to their community and interpreting and applying the study findings in their community. The EPRP supports many such community-based research grants throughout the United States.

For more information about CDC's EPRP, please contact the Office of Science and Extramural Research, Public Health Practice Program Office, CDC, 4770 Buford Highway, NE, MS K-56, Atlanta, GA 30341-3724  
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