

# BREATHING EASIER *in* RHODE ISLAND



SUCCESS STORIES FROM  
THE RHODE ISLAND  
ASTHMA CONTROL PROGRAM



“The management of asthma is greatly dependent on the quality of care that patients receive as well as the environments in which they live. These are both a responsibility of public health. We could not sustain our program without CDC funds.”

## NANCY SUTTON

program manager

RHODE ISLAND'S

ASTHMA CONTROL PROGRAM

## THE PROBLEMS:

- For the past decade, about 1 in 10 Rhode Island adults has lived with asthma.
- In 2010, 15 percent of Rhode Island children had ever been diagnosed with the chronic respiratory disease, and 12 percent of the state's children were currently living with asthma.
- Overall, rates of asthma-related emergency department visits for children younger than 18 have gone up in recent years.
- In 2006–2007, asthma-related hospitalization costs totaled \$35 million.

## THE PUBLIC HEALTH RESPONSE TO ASTHMA:

Rhode Island's Asthma Control Program and its partners focus on communities with the greatest needs. They increase asthma awareness, educate people on how to avoid environmental asthma triggers, partner with community stakeholders, and help residents manage their own health. And their efforts are paying off.

- The asthma program joined forces with fellow chronic disease workers via the Rhode Island Chronic Care Collaborative to leverage resources and reach thousands of residents with asthma who are uninsured or underinsured. As a result, health care providers at many health centers now are trained in up-to-date asthma care. The results: Among the targeted population, asthma patients with documented self-management goals went from about 34 percent to 52 percent. Also, patients with well-controlled asthma rose from about 74 percent to 82 percent.
- Families in the Providence area are feeling empowered to manage their children's asthma thanks to a new asthma response program. Family participants, who are identified during asthma-related emergency room visits, are visited three times by a certified asthma educator, community health worker, or both. Families learn how to rid their environments of asthma triggers and manage medication use, and they are connected with community resources. The results? More than 65 percent of families reported improved daytime symptoms, and overall visits to the doctor and missed school days dropped dramatically.
- In partnership with community health workers and local hospitals, the state asthma program surveyed residents of the Newport Housing Authority, finding that half of the housing units were home to at least one person with asthma. The biggest complaint among those surveyed was secondhand smoke. The findings informed a new smoke-free policy and made the Newport Housing Authority the first housing authority in Rhode Island to go smoke-free.
- In Rhode Island, asthma results in millions of dollars in health care costs—costs that are largely preventable through an evidence-based, public health approach to asthma control.



## CDC's National Asthma Control Program

Rhode Island is one of 36 states that receives funding and technical support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Asthma Control Program. Since 1999, CDC has been leading public health efforts to prevent costly asthma complications, create asthma-friendly environments, and empower people living with asthma with the tools they need to better manage their own health. **Find out more at** [www.cdc.gov/asthma](http://www.cdc.gov/asthma).

