

Wisconsin's Healthy Housing Initiatives Portfolio (WHHIP)

Program Abstract

In response to substantive and persistent inequities in housing quality and the adverse health outcomes that stem from these inequities, Wisconsin's Bureau of Environmental and Occupational Health has developed a portfolio of complementary programs that seek to identify where disparities exist and work across portfolio constituent programs to address them. The overarching goal of this suite of programs is to ensure that all Wisconsin residents have access to safe, high-quality and healthy housing and neighborhoods.

The primary anchors of the WHHIP are the Lead-Safe Homes Program and the Asthma-Safe Homes Program. The objective of the Lead-Safe Homes Program (LSHP) is to abate lead hazards in rental and owner-occupied residential properties throughout the state in order to minimize and further prevent the long-term adverse health effects associated with lead exposure. The program prioritizes enrollment of properties where children have been lead poisoned, but LSHP can also enroll and abate properties before children become poisoned or even exposed. The objectives of the Asthma-Safe Homes Program (ASHP) are to provide guidelines-based asthma self-management education, durables to reduce asthma triggers, and home assessment and repair services to Medicaid-eligible children and pregnant adults with uncontrolled asthma. It seeks to improve outcomes and reduce disparities related to asthma. Other programs that contribute to this work include the CDC-funded cooperative agreements related to asthma control and childhood lead poisoning prevention and a HUD-funded hazard control grant. In order to provide coordination of policy and narrative and identify and fill needed gaps in services, BEOH has created a Healthy Housing Work Group with representation from all relevant programs. Among the chief and more novel outcomes for this group is narrative that seeks to provide framing for questions around the appropriateness of program costs as a worthwhile investment of public funds for the future of today's children as well as those of future generations.

Both LSHP and ASHP are funded through a Children's Health Insurance Plan (CHIP) state plan amendment, whereby state funding is provided to support program objectives with substantial match from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. This funding supports local administrative partners that establish relationships with program clients; the range of local partners includes housing-focused nonprofits such as Habitat for Humanity, community action programs, local public health agencies, a children's hospital and a federally-qualified healthcare organization.

Since their inception in 2019 and 2022, respectively, LSHP and ASHP have quickly grown to fully utilize the funding they have received from state and federal sources. LSHP has completed over 330 abatement projects, and ASHP has conducted 229 in-home asthma education sessions with pediatric and pregnant clients.