Providence Healthy Homes Project
City of Providence, Rhode Island
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Providence Neighborhood Housing Corporation, Greater Elmwood Neighborhood Services, The Childhood Lead Action Project, Environmental Health Watch, The National Center for Lead-Safe Housing, Brown University's Center for Environmental Studies

The City of Providence's Department of Planning and Development and its non-profit subsidiary the Providence Neighborhood Housing Corporation (PNHC) will be responsible for overall project management. Greater Elmwood Neighborhood Services (GENS), a community based organization, will be responsible for day-to-day management of assessment and control of multiple environmental hazards, training of neighborhood residents, education of residents and collection of data for evaluation of the cost effectiveness of Healthy Homes activities. The Childhood Lead Action Project (the Project) will provide comprehensive community-wide Healthy Homes education. Environmental Health Watch (EHW), a Cleveland non-profit organization, will adapt the Healthy Homes hazard assessment and control protocols it developed in Cleveland to Providence housing stock and will provide training to GENS assessors and construction specialists. The National Center for Lead-Safe Housing will develop protocols for collection and analysis of data to evaluate the cost effectiveness of the Healthy Homes approach in Providence, train and monitor GENS data collection and data management staff, control the quality of the data, analyze the data and report the results to HUD. Brown University's Center for Environmental Studies and Dr. Bruce Lanphear will provide a range of scientific consultative services to the project.

Providence was the recipient of a round six HUD lead hazard control grant. The plan is to amend that grant agreement so that some 308 of the housing units scheduled for lead hazard control treatments will also be assessed not only for lead hazards but also for hazards that cause respiratory disease, including asthma, carbon monoxide poisoning or fires or other unintentional injuries. 169 of those units will receive comprehensive Healthy Homes treatments to control identified lead and other environmental hazards. The other 139 units will receive only lead hazard control treatments and will serve as a control group for evaluating the effectiveness of comprehensive Healthy Homes treatments. Lead hazard funds will only be used for eligible lead activities, and all lead hazard control requirements will continue to be met. This project will be a model for integrated lead plus Healthy Homes projects.
Most of the target area is in the Providence Enterprise Community zone. Approximately 57% of the city's housing was built before 1940. Some 25% of the housing is substandard. While housing data is not broken down by neighborhoods as well as desired, the target area includes virtually all of the very low-income families and older, deteriorated rental housing in the city. One quarter of screened children have blood lead levels above 10 gg/dl; and at least 4.2 per thousand of children were hospitalized for asthma in 1997. In 1998, 83% of the 332 fires that required fire department response were in the target area. Brown University found that Providence housing units in which children with elevated blood lead live are more than three times as likely to house asthmatic children than housing with no EBL children. Brown has identified and mapped the buildings in which both EBL and asthmatic children have lived in recent years. The project will focus on those buildings.

PNHC and GENS are managing Providence's round six lead hazard control project. GENS recently completed a very successful HUD/CDC Neighborhood-Based Childhood Lead Primary Prevention Program on time and within budget, including abating lead hazards in 190 housing units, training 102 unemployed neighborhood residents and starting up 7 minority firms. The Project has seven years of experience in providing education, parent support and advocacy for lead poisoning prevention in the project area. Brown has provided major advice to Rhode Island and Providence on environmental matters. EHW helped manage and evaluate Cleveland's two HUD funded lead hazard control programs. With help from a committee of national experts, EHW developed Healthy Homes hazard assessment and control protocols and training and education materials for the unique lead-plus-asthma program now being implemented in Cleveland. The Center is finishing the National Evaluation of HUD's lead hazard control grant program and an evaluation of HUD's risk assessment guidelines. It developed and is now revising the HUD Guidelines. It developed HUD's risk assessment training materials and is now developing training for clearance technicians and renovation contractors for EPA. Dr. Lanphear has carried out important research on lead matters for HUD and private foundations. We believe the project team is well qualified to carry out this ground breaking demonstration project.

The project will have a major impact on the housing in which largely poor, minority children have been found to have elevated levels of lead in their blood and been hospitalized for asthma. The housing to be treated will all be owned by families with incomes below 80% of median. Housing in which hazards have been controlled will be made available to low-income, at-risk families for at least three years. Low-income residents citywide will understand how to protect their children. Providence will use the project findings to update its housing code and rehabilitation standards. The Department of Inspections and Standards will enforce code compliance against over income owners of unhealthy housing units. The extensive evaluation component will help Providence, HUD and the nation better understand how a Healthy Homes project can be effectively implemented and how cost effective it can be.

This important work will be accomplished by enrolling carefully targeted housing with known risks, identifying lead, asthma and injury causing hazards and treating them with state-of-the-art hazard control techniques. All work will be carried out by proven, experienced organizations. Carefully collected and scientifically analyzed data will demonstrate project costs and effectiveness. By combining lead hazard control funds with Healthy Homes funds, the project will ensure that HUD's funds are used as efficiently as possible.
Product Outcomes/Outputs:
- Abate 190 housing units in lead hazards
- Will train 102 unemployed neighborhood residents
- Will start 7 minority firms