Healthy Homes Grantees in Region 1 – New England

Name of Grantee: City of Stamford, Department of Health and Social Services
Name of Project: City of Stamford Healthy Homes Demonstration and Education Program
Amount Awarded: $ 850,000
Year of Grant: 2001
Contact Info: Anthony Iton, 203-977-4396

Project Partners:

Summary of Project Activities:

Very few cities have the ability and resources to tackle a complex environmental health challenge such as that posed by pediatric asthma. Stamford, Connecticut is an exception. In Stamford, every critical component necessary for a comprehensive citywide collaboration is in place in the Stamford Healthy Homes Demonstration program. As a result, this creative initiative offers a unique opportunity to tackle this pediatric environmental health problem in a multi-faceted and comprehensive manner.

The prevalence of childhood asthma in Stamford is 35% higher than that of surrounding Fairfield County. Stamford's rate of asthma emergency room visits is 28% greater than that of the state as a whole. Hospital admissions for asthma in Stamford exceed that of the state as a whole by 33%. Stamford children are hospitalized for asthma 2.4 times more often than are children in our neighboring communities.

The Stamford Health & Social Services Department has made pediatric asthma its number one health service priority. As a result of being fully integrated into the city's school system, the Health Department has been able to develop a detailed pediatric health database that contains every school-aged child in Stamford. Every child with asthma in the Stamford schools has been identified and is known to the Health Department's school nurses. All pediatric asthma cases have been mapped employing GIS technology.

The Housing Code Enforcement branch of the Health Department licenses over 10,000 multi-family housing units and conducts over 2500 housing inspections annually. In Stamford, every multi-family dwelling, rooming house, hotel, and tax-abatement property is licensed by the Health Department. The Department maintains a comprehensive database of all multi-family unit dwellings in Stamford. A separate database of housing code violations is also maintained. Both of these databases have been mapped using GIS technology. These maps have been electronically superimposed upon the Stamford school asthma database and the lead poisoning database. The result is a compelling geographic picture of environmentally related childhood disease in Stamford. This analysis reveals pronounced environmental health "hotspots" in Stamford. By employing this targeted data-driven strategy the Health Department has
been able to prioritize its daily work. It is this expertise upon which the Stamford Healthy Homes Initiative will build.

Stamford's asthma cases are clustered in areas of high density, older stock multi-family housing. These areas consisting of six inner-city census tracts along the Interstate-95 corridor will be the target areas for Stamford's Healthy Homes Demonstration program. 8,802 children live within these areas. The majority of the children residing in these tracts are considered at risk of lead poisoning and other environmental hazards, due to the age and deterioration of the housing stock. These neighborhoods account for a disproportionate share of all asthma cases in school-aged children in Stamford. The target area contains census block groups with asthma prevalence rates ranging as high as 24%, or nearly 200% greater than the overall city prevalence.

The National Academy Sciences (NAS) has emphasized that asthmatic individuals living in multi-family housing units frequently do not have control over several aspects of their indoor environments that would be desirable to modify, such as carpeting, excessive moisture, and comprehensive pest management. Therefore, NAS has recommended that environmental intervention programs must specifically address the real world living conditions of poor and inner city populations. Stamford's HHI program will do just that. The families of asthmatic children that live within the target area will be contacted by a Stamford Health Department community health nurse. Those children that live in multifamily housing in which multiple housing code violations have been reported will receive the highest priority.

**Product Outcomes/Outputs:**

- It is anticipated that 300 asthmatic children will be enrolled during the 3-year grant period. Each family will be offered a comprehensive asthma intervention that will include:
  1. Standardized baseline pediatric asthma assessment.
  2. One-on-one community nurse education about the environmental triggers of asthma and indoor air quality enhancement.
  3. Tools to reduce the child's exposure to asthma triggers and other environmental health and safety hazards.
  4. Tools to aid in the self-management and monitoring of asthma.
  5. A home/apartment unit inspection by a community health nurse with an eye towards educating the tenant about environmental concerns in the home that are within the tenant's general control.
  6. A thorough home/unit and building inspection by a Stamford Health Department housing code inspector focusing on structural or code related issues that may not be within the immediate control of the tenant.
  7. Medical case management services including a referral to a pediatric pulmonary specialist for a comprehensive clinical evaluation and management plan.
  8. An opportunity for a scholarship to an asthma summer camp.
  9. An opportunity to participate in the Open Airways Program.
10. A follow-up assessment to determine the effectiveness of the intervention.

Property owners that opt to participate in the program will be able to take advantage of small ($1500) grants or larger ($5000) loans to subsidize hazard reduction and code compliance work. In exchange, these property owners will commit to maintaining these units as affordable units in Stamford, according to the guidelines established by the City's Community Development Department.

In conclusion, Stamford's Healthy Homes Demonstration program utilizes the best of GIS technology to identify at-risk children, builds upon departmental expertise in residential health and safety programs, establishes critical community partnerships to leverage resources, and creates a new incentive program for owners of deteriorating urban properties to abate known environmental health risks.