

## Healthy Homes Grantees in Region VI, Southwest

**Name of Grantee:** University of Tulsa  
**Name of Project:** Entitlement Assessment Tools to Address Multiple Health and Safety Hazards in Low-Income Minority Homes  
**Amount Awarded:** \$ 700,000  
**Year of Grant:** 2001  
**Contact Info:**

**Project Partners:** University of Tulsa Indoor Air program and the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio (UTHSCSA)

### Summary of Project Activities:

This project is focused on the development of cost-effective, preventive measures that can provide a demonstrated reduction in children's health problems and injury-related accidents. It will be built upon the resources and expertise of currently existing programs that are nationally recognized and established at the University of Tulsa Indoor Air program and the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio (UTHSCSA). This collaboration shall ensure the development of a working model, which bridges the needs of children in low income minority families, with the need for environmental health training in medical and nursing schools to more effectively address the rising rate of serious diseases, safety related accidents, and health costs in low-income urban settings. The project would take place in Laredo, Texas. Laredo, situated at the U.S.-Mexico border, has one of the highest rates of poverty and unemployment among U.S. cities

Other organizations which will contribute time, resources, and/or assistance to the project include: Laredo Health Department, Laredo Independent School District and United Independent School District (represent the 2 public school districts in Laredo), Mid Rio-Grande Area Health Education Center, Gateway Community Health center, (a local organization focusing on preventive health services for the indigent poor), the City of Laredo department of Community Development, and the Respira Asthma Coalition. The Respira Coalition is currently working under a Health resources and Services Administration (HRSA) grant focusing on a more comprehensive surveillance protocol for children with asthma in the Laredo Area.

The project would forge a unique alliance between medical professionals and environmental scientists to yield a number of significant tangible outcomes:

- 1) Develop and refine customized tools, integrating the expertise of both medical and environmental scientists, to assess and respond to safety and environmental hazards (e.g. potential allergens, lead in dust, pests/pesticides, combustion byproducts, moisture/mold, drinking water contaminants, electrical dangers, toxic household products, typical IAQ contaminants) in homes, with low-cost/no-cost mitigation plans. The tools would reflect a simplified model that can be used by volunteer groups within communities, as well as medical students, residents,

nursing students, and public health students. The tools would include an educational component, teaching modules, and training modules. The basic assessment tools would be available in both English and Spanish.

- 2) Train medical professionals on environmental factors that can contribute to disease and injury to children. The educational module will be incorporated into the training curriculum of the South Texas Environmental Education and Research (STEER) program. Steer offers to physicians-in-training, and other students in the health professions, a unique 1-month border environmental health elective in Laredo, Texas. The classroom education will be complemented by Environmental House calls (EHCS) to homes by students within the program. The EHCs shall provide a powerful and memorable experiential learning opportunity for students to view firsthand the relationship between a common illness, safety-related hazards, asthma, and the environment. The project will also teach students to step outside a treatment-based medicine paradigm into a preventive one.
- 3) Educate community partners on environmental factors that can contribute to disease and injury to children. The educational modules developed for the assessment tools are to be utilized to provide a one-and-a-half day training session for the project community partners and organizations that respond to housing needs within the border area. The session shall also be open to other interested organizations in the country at no cost. Homeowners shall also be invited to the sessions to participate in the learning process and learn more of available resources to address their housing needs. This training session is but one of the many assurances within this project to enhance the sustainability of the program after the grant period has ended. The STEER program shall also continue to work with the border area after the grant period has ended, and shall make every effort to incorporate the practical outcomes from the project study into its continued work in the border area.
- 4) Evaluate, using onsite assessment tools, to determine the impact of the home assessment and subsequent interventions in the field, using a number of outcome measures. Approximately 60 homes of children diagnosed with asthma are targeted for participation in the field validation of the environmental assessment tools. An environmental review will be performed of the homes, and homeowners will be instructed on the potential hazards that may exist in their homes. All of the data collected from use of checklists, action plans, follow-up inspections, questionnaires, diaries, log sheets, and measurement instruments will be recorded in a database(s). All results shall be used to assess the effectiveness of the evaluation tools and refine the set of checklist assessment tools and associated training materials.
- 5) Serve a low income, minority population in improving residential environmental conditions adversely affecting the health and safety of children, and extend to other programs across the country. Over 60 homes in Laredo and surrounding

colonias will be immediately benefited by the study. The long-term benefits of the study are far reaching in terms of the number of homes that will be served as this tool and training module are integrated into similar community efforts in the United States. Project deliverables shall be made available to other communities in need through HUD's existing programs. This program will also be made available to other medical and nursing schools to implement in neighboring low-income communities. Increasingly, medical schools are being asked to contribute tangibly to the health of the communities they serve, as well as provide community experiences for their students. This program provides these dual benefits in one package. Its widespread adoption by health care providers, for example, HMOs working together with medical schools, offers the potential to reduce asthma and injuries in low-income areas while teaching future health practitioners about illness prevention.

**Product Outcomes/Outputs:**

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