



# HEALTHY HOMES COMMUNITY INITIATIVE

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## WHAT IS THE HEALTHY HOMES COMMUNITY INITIATIVE?



The Healthy Homes Community Initiative (HHCI) is a demonstration pilot where EPA Region 7 partners with environmental, health, and energy organizations in the Kansas City Metropolitan Area. Partners provide educational information as well as services which assist community members to address concerns related to health and the indoor environment. A collaborative approach is used to address the health and environmental concerns within the home.

### The components to the initiative include:

- **Community Train-the-Trainer Sessions** - Sessions that are designed to make community members more effective at helping others learn about health and the home environment.
- **Outreach at Community Events** - Healthy Homes outreach and educational information is provided at neighborhood events.
- **Community Presentations** - Presentations given to provide information regarding health and the home environment to community leaders, parent groups, and service providers to increase awareness regarding health and the home.
- **Media Campaign** - Educational and resource information goes out in a clear and concise manner so that community members know where to go for help or resources associated with health and the home environment.

### WHAT CONCERNS DOES THE HHCI ADDRESS?

The Healthy Homes Community Initiative provides community members with empowering information that assists them in identifying hazards within their home environment, steps which they can take to address these concerns, and information regarding resources available in the area. Subjects addressed include: allergens/asthma, asbestos, lead, mold/moisture, insects/rodents/pesticides, weatherization/energy conservation, radon, waste reduction and recycling.

## BACKGROUND

The home is a system in which its workings are interrelated as are its problems. The National Center for Healthy Housing reports that in the American Housing Survey of 2005, 2 million homes had severe problems, and 4.2 million homes had moderate problems. This rating system did not include insects, humidity and condensation, lead-based paint, radon and asbestos.

The quality of housing significantly affects the health of the individuals who live in them. Asthma rates are 40-50% higher among children of color living in U.S. cities. Children from low-income communities are more likely to be lead poisoned than their wealthier counterparts.

The annual costs for environmentally attributable childhood diseases in the U.S. are \$54.9 billion. This does not include the additional costs for the estimated 10 million school days missed a year due to complications for asthma.

Low-income and minority populations continue to be disproportionately impacted by lead poisoning and asthma.





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## THE HOME SYSTEM

Historically, environmental education has been presented categorically—allergens, asthma, asbestos, lead, mold and moisture, insects/rodents/pesticides, weatherization/energy conservation, and radon.

EPA is proposing an integrated approach that recognizes the home as a system and considers:

- People living in the home;
- the structure; and
- potential health hazards.

All associated programs within EPA are involved in this initiative as a collaborative and sustainable team. The primary focus of this pilot is to reach disadvantaged populations, though the approach and the lessons learned benefit all communities.

## CONTACTS

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## WHO IS THE HHCI TARGET AUDIENCE?

EPA Region 7 and their partners work in economically distressed neighborhoods in the Kansas City Metropolitan Area. These neighborhoods have many of the risk factors associated with poor housing conditions and increased exposure to environmental hazards.

## WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF THE HHCI?

The goal of this initiative is to model an approach which may be duplicated in other communities as a means to educate families resulting in reductions in: elevated blood-lead levels (EBLs), asthma attacks, energy usage, exposure to household toxins, and exposure to other household hazards such as radon and asbestos.

## WHO ARE THE HHCI PARTNERS?

Partnering organizations include: the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Children's Mercy Hospital, Metropolitan Energy Center, Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit, Bridging the Gap, Black Health Care Coalition, and the Kansas City Missouri Health Department.

Each contributing partner lends their expertise as well as support resources available to homeowners in the pilot neighborhoods. Available resources from the partners include: lead testing, lead remediation, asthma screens, home environmental assessments, home weatherization training and energy audits.

## WHAT ARE THE HHCI ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES?

- Increased numbers of families addressing health and environmental concerns
- Increased number of children being tested for lead
- Increased number of children screened for asthma
- Increased community participation in health and environmental service programs
- Reduced asthma and allergy emergency room visits
- Reduced asthma hospitalizations
- Reduced number of EBL children
- Reduced number of school days missed due to asthma related illnesses
- Reduced radon exposure
- Reduced lead hazards in homes

Please note: Resources supporting the outcomes listed above come from several sources, including the Department of Housing and Urban Development. The benefit of this initiative is organizations working collaboratively with a consistent message and goal. Together, we provide greater benefits to communities.

