

## **Boston Asthma Initiative Home-Based Asthma Education and Advocacy**

Partners in Health and Housing Prevention Research Center, October 2004-December 2006

### **Overview**

The Boston Asthma Initiative (BAI) is a community-based program working to eliminate asthma triggers in the home and school in Boston neighborhoods in providing asthma education to families at home and in classrooms of the Boston Public Schools. BAI is funded by the Community Benefits Offices of Children's Hospital and Brigham and Women's Hospital. BAI receives referrals for home visits from hospitals, local health centers and housing agencies. Home visits to families include education about the disease of asthma; medical management of asthma; home environment triggers such as cockroach and mice, mold, mildew, cigarette smoke; reduction or elimination of triggers and smoking cessation. Standardized surveys are used to collect data on progress of asthma management and analyzed at Children's and Brigham and Women's Hospitals.

BAI also assists local public schools in addressing environmental concerns, created an asthma resource guide and asthma support groups and assists the Boston Public Health Commission with a swim program for asthmatic children. The BAI extends itself to serve as a referral resource for families to housing, legal aid, and public health information.

A significant percentage of referrals to BAI for asthma issues came from residents living in Boston public housing. In April 2003, BAI expressed great interest in a community linkage activity with the Partners in Health and Housing Prevention Research Center that would provide support to develop a more effective program in public housing developments. The objectives of the PHHPRC partnership with BAI include:

- To help implement the BAI model of home asthma education and advocacy for better asthma management in Boston public housing, with initial emphasis on Jamaica Plain.
- To train public housing residents as Asthma Health Advocates to work with asthmatic families in public housing, under the supervision of BAI
- To evaluate the success of training and employing public housing residents in asthma education and advocacy.

This agreement was to support a three-year Resident Asthma Advocate Program.

Beginning in 2005, BAI and the education core of the PRC developed materials and outreach necessary to initiate a Resident Asthma Advocate Program (RAA) to include: job description, training, evaluation and outreach to the South St and Bromley Heath Housing Developments located in Jamaica Plain.

In March 2006, two residents (initially Resident Health Advocates) were trained as Resident Asthma Advocates and began assisting BAI staff in doing home visits and assisting with education and data collection. The RAAs received additional training accompanying BAI staff to in-service training for asthma outreach workers at Children's Hospital and a 16-hour integrated pest management (IPM) training.

The program is seeking additional funding to continue its work and provide career opportunities for the Resident Asthma Advocates.

To learn more, contact [Pat Hynes](#) at 617-638-7720