

InStep with School Health

Volume 3

Spring 2004

Issue 1

NEW!!! THE ON-LINE VERSION OF THE CSHP NEWSLETTER

From the Editor

Many of us think of a school as a place where children and adolescents can explore new ideas while gaining the knowledge they need to become caring and successful members of society. But how often do we think about the school as a physical environment, and the effects this environment can have on the people who spend most of their time there?

Many people in Massachusetts are working to make sure that schools are safe and comfortable for students and staff. Recent interactions with several of these programs have revealed how many building issues school administrators must be aware of *in addition to* reaching the educational goals of the school. Luckily, many resources for schools needing assistance in maintaining or improving upon their environment are available in this issue.

We hope you will find these resources useful, and if you have any suggestions or ideas, please let us know and we will share them in the next issue.

Issue Highlights:

Asthma and CSHP..... p. 3

Newton schools address
environmental issues.....p. 6

New data on asthma..... p. 5

Tools you can use.....pp. 3, 4, 8

MDPH Addresses Asthma

Asthma is one of the most common chronic conditions in the United States and has been increasing in prevalence for the past two decades. In 2001, self-reported data from the Massachusetts Behavioral Risk Factor Survey System (BRFSS) indicated that asthma affected 460,000 adults in the Commonwealth or 9.5% of the population over the age of 18. Data from the same report showed that current asthma affected almost 9% of children under age 18.

In response to the public health issues associated with asthma, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) initially established an internal asthma work group to insure coordination of departmental efforts.

Subsequently, MDPH established the Asthma Coordination Project to continue coordinating internal efforts and to also organize, collaborate and communicate with external groups, organizations and individuals working to reduce the burden of asthma in Massachusetts. As a result of work with its partners, MDPH has received funds to develop the Massachusetts Asthma Planning Collaborative Initiative (MAPCI).

In addition, a major MDPH effort is underway to conduct surveillance of asthma prevalence in cities/towns on the individual school level (K-8). School nurse-leaders in districts with Essential School Health Services grants were surveyed last year regarding asthma among students in their schools. This March, participating districts received individualized reports on asthma prevalence in their schools for the 2002-2003 school year. In April, a second wave of the survey was sent to all schools with K-8 students in order to obtain 2003-2004 asthma prevalence data for all elementary schools in the state.

MDPH has a wide range of asthma projects across many bureaus including the Bureaus of Family & Community Health; Environmental Health Assessment; Health Statistics, Research and Evaluation; and Communicable Disease Control, as well as the Office of Healthy Communities and the Massachusetts Tobacco Control Program. The following are some of the major asthma-related initiatives from MDPH that affect children and schools:

(continued next page)

MDPH Addresses Asthma

(Continued From Previous Page)

1. Environmental Public Health Tracking Program: Massachusetts was one of seven states nationally to receive an implementation award from CDC to develop environmental health tracking and surveillance systems. This is one of three systems being developed for use in Massachusetts, and is modeled after the Merrimack Valley study where collaboration with school nurses has yielded success in establishing accurate and reliable survey data. Contact Frances M. Dwyer, (617) 624-5757

2. Emergency Response/Indoor Air Quality Program (ER/IAQ): The ER/IAQ program conducts investigations of indoor air quality in public buildings throughout Massachusetts on an ongoing basis. The ER/IAQ staff provides technical assistance to school and local health officials concerning remediation steps that may be used to improve the quality of indoor air. Contact: Mike Feeney, (617) 624-5757.

3. School Health Services: School nurses in all schools play a critical role in the management of asthma in the school-age population, as well as in surveillance activities for this health condition. Recognizing the need to document this role, the MDPH School Health Unit has implemented data requirements for the 103 Essential School Health Service Programs (ESHS). These programs are partially funded through the MDPH and serve approximately 560,000 students. Monthly data submissions include (a) number of prescriptions and dosages of asthma medications, both daily and PRN, (b) peak flow assessments, (c) nebulizer treatments, and (d) asthma action plans (AAP). Required annual reports include the numbers of children with asthma. This method of surveillance supplements the surveillance begun in collaboration

with the Bureau of Environmental Health Assessment. The ESHS programs were requested to participate in asthma surveillance activities this past year in preparation for expanding the initiative statewide in the spring of 2004.

In addition, the ESHS programs are required to choose one quality improvement program to be implemented in FY04. Of the six proposed choices, three address asthma management with the following anticipated outcomes:

- 1) Students with prescriptions for asthma medication have a completed AAP on file;
- 2) Students with exacerbation of asthma symptoms during the school day can be adequately treated by the school nurse and returned to class with minimal disruption of time in learning due to the students' early dismissal from school. Contact Anne Sheetz, (617) 624-6018.

4. Occupational Health Surveillance: MA is funded by the CDC to conduct a state-wide surveillance of work-related asthma cases, including new-onset asthma and work-aggravated asthma. Health care providers in MA are required by law to report suspected or confirmed cases of occupational asthma to the DPH. Education is the second most frequently reported industry and teachers are the third most frequently reported occupation for work-related asthma. These data have directed our outreach and research efforts for school staff. A pilot survey has been developed to administer to approximately 10 elementary schools. From this outreach effort we hope to evaluate the work environment and the burden of asthma among school staff. Contact Kathy Raleigh (617) 988-3345.

InStep with School Health is a collaboration between the Massachusetts Departments of Education and Public Health with support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

If you would like to contribute to *InStep*, make suggestions or comments, or receive a hard copy please contact the editor at (617) 624-5537, or michelle.zbell@state.ma.us

Attention school staff! We are looking for content for our next issue. We want to know what you are doing around HIV/AIDS prevention and education!

If you have information or programs to share, please contact the editor at (617) 624-5537, or michelle.zbell@state.ma.us

Coming soon!

Food Allergy On Line Courses

This summer, Framingham State College and the John Stalker Institute of Food and Nutrition will offer on-line courses on the basics of food allergy and food allergy school policy. Teachers and nurses can earn PDPs and graduate credit in the comfort of their own homes.

To receive detailed information about course descriptions, dates, fees, and registration email Christanne Smith Harrison at: [\(christanne@verizon.net\)](mailto:christanne@verizon.net)

How coordinated school health programming (CSHP) can work at your school: Incorporating asthma prevention programs and services into the CSHP model

Health Services: Keep an up-to-date list of all students requiring medication and make sure it's available at all times.

Health Education: Integrate asthma awareness and lung health education lessons into health curricula.

Food/Nutrition Services: Keep places where food is served and students gather clean and free of allergens and irritants.

Health Promotion for Staff: Provide and/or support smoking prevention and cessation programs.

Parent/Community Involvement: Obtain written parental permission to share student health information with providers



Safe and Healthful School Environment
Prohibit tobacco use at *ALL* times, including school sponsored events. Use available resources like *Tools for Schools*, or the *Healthy Schools Checklist* to prevent indoor air quality problems by reducing allergens and irritants. Use integrated pest management (IPM) techniques to control pests (see article below on IPM in Mass for more information).

Physical Education: Provide modified activities to include students with asthma and ensure access to medications during activity.

Family/Consumer Science: Include education about proper use and storage of chemicals.

Social Services: Provide case management for students with frequent school absences, school health office visits, emergency department visits, or hospitalizations.

INDOOR AIR QUALITY TOOLS FOR SCHOOLS ACTION KIT



Many indoor air quality problems can impact the health of students and staff, including those with asthma. In order to help improve indoor air quality problems in school building, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), developed the Indoor Air Quality (IAG) Tools for Schools Action Kit. This kit helps school personnel identify, solve, and prevent indoor air quality problems. The kit uses a 19-step management plan and checklist for the entire building to help schools lower their staff and students' risk of exposure to asthma triggers.

Tools for Schools is available for downloading at <http://www.epa.gov/iaq/schools/tools4s2.html>, or you can call the U.S. EPA IAG Clearinghouse to receive a hard copy at 1-800-438-4318.

The EPA Regional Office for Massachusetts is located at:
1 Congress Street
Suite 1100
Boston, MA 02114
(617) 918-1533

Introducing the Healthy Schools Checklist for Massachusetts

Addressing indoor air quality (IAQ) and environmental health and safety issues in schools has always been important to local and state public health, environmental regulatory and school officials in Massachusetts. However, the desire to achieve healthy IAQ and indoor environmental quality was not always realized due to the myriad of environmental health and safety laws and regulations promulgated by different state and federal agencies. Schools not only had difficulty identifying which agencies to work with, they were also unaware of the spectrum of laws and regulations applying to them in the first place.

The Healthy Schools Council (HSC) was created in 2001 to gather all state and federal regulations applying to public and private schools alike. Members were drawn from the Department of Education, the Department of Public Health, the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, the Division of Occupational Safety, the Department of Environmental Protection, the Department of Agricultural Resources, and the Attorney General's Office. A working subcommittee of this council researched and developed what is now known as the Healthy Schools Checklist.

The checklist addresses the primary indoor environmental health and safety issues identified by the HSC sub-committee. It also contains information and resources to assist Massachusetts' school systems in identifying and remediating indoor environment health and safety problems.

The rules and regulations regarding the following categories are detailed in the checklist:

- 1. Renovations in buildings while occupied (or adjacent to occupied areas)*
- 2. Heating, Ventilating and Air-Conditioning (HVAC) systems maintenance (including vehicle exhaust entrainment issues)*
- 3. Furnace/Boiler Maintenance and Emergency Generators*
- 4. Building envelope issues*
- 5. Chemical Management (storage/use practices)*
- 6. Drinking water (Lead and Other Issues)*
- 7. Asbestos Management plans*
- 8. Integrated Pest Management (IPM) plans*
- 9. Underground Storage Tanks*
- 10. Septic systems/sanitary sewers*
- 11. Miscellaneous maintenance/custodial issues*

Several Massachusetts schools are now working with the checklist and early response has been positive. All school officials have been surprised by the number of rules and regulations contained in the checklist, but are relieved that this important information is located in one document. The Healthy Schools Council Subcommittee will continue introducing the checklist to school districts across the state. To get a copy of the checklist, go to the following link: <http://www.state.ma.us/dph/beha/iaq/schools/schools.htm>, or contact Andrea Ranger, Massachusetts Department of Education at 781-338-6531 or aranger@doe.mass.edu.

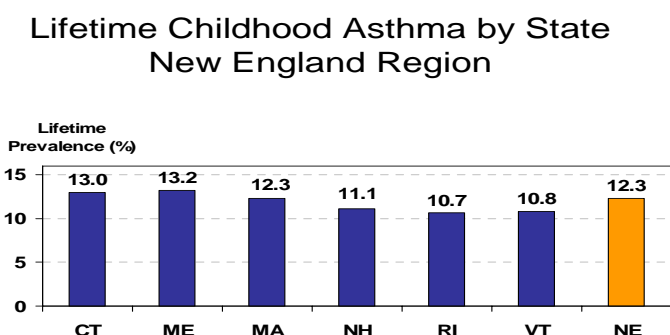
Attention! New Data on Children and Asthma

The New England Asthma Regional Council, a program of The Medical Foundation, recently released a report on asthma among New England children. A few highlights are included below. A complete report can be downloaded from:

http://www.asthmaregionalcouncil.org/documents/AsthmainNewEngland_000.DOC

In 2001, the overall lifetime prevalence rate for childhood asthma in New England was 12.3%, representing an estimated 411,200 children age 17 and younger. Lifetime childhood asthma rates were similar in all New England states, ranging from 10.7% in Rhode Island to 13.2% in Maine.

Figure 1.

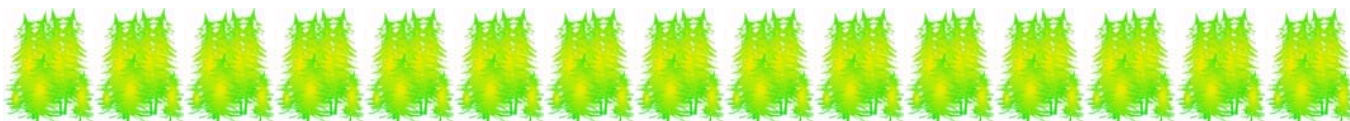


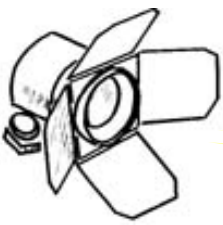
Lifetime asthma prevalence represents those children under 18 years of age who were ever told they had asthma. Lifetime child asthma rates were similar for all six New England states, ranging from 10.7% in Rhode Island to 13.2% in Maine.

Source: 2001 BRFSS.

- Higher lifetime childhood asthma rates were reported in households in which the adult respondent was non-Hispanic black (17.5%) or Hispanic (17.6%) than in households in which the adult respondent was white (11.4%).
- Children in households with an income less than \$25,000 (17.5%) were more likely than other children to be reported to have lifetime asthma.
- Households in which there was only one adult present were more likely to report a child with lifetime asthma (16.3%) than households with two (11.1%) or three (11.8%) adults.
- If the adult respondent was a current smoker, the childhood lifetime asthma rate was higher than was the case if the respondent did not smoke (14.7% vs. 11.5%).

The Massachusetts Healthy Schools website has great info on creating a healthy school environment: http://www.mphaweb.org/pol_schools.html





SPOTLIGHT: Healthy Communities Grant, Newton Public Schools, by Lynn Rose

The City of Newton and the Newton Public Schools are working to develop school-based systems and technical assistance (TA) resources to address and prevent environmental health and safety problems. The goals of the program are: 1) build capacity among municipal agencies to provide technical assistance to schools to develop environmental systems, and 2) pilot the program in one school district, the Newton Public Schools.

The project has two main components. The first is utilizing a team-based approach to work with municipal departments to assess school buildings and benchmark their environmental systems. These systems include but are not limited to: chemical and hazardous waste management, indoor air quality (IAQ), pest management, recycling, and energy conservation. The project is using the *MA School Chemical Management Guide*, *Tools for Schools*, the *MA Healthy School Checklist*, and other related environmental management information to guide the building assessments.

The second component is developing long-term, local comprehensive technical assistance from towns and cities to their schools to develop environmental management systems (EMS). Newton's pilot environmental program is serving as a model to create a training program that will be provided to other municipal departments across the state to work with their schools.

The project has trained and facilitated a team at the municipal level, the District Environmental Management Team (DEMT), to coordinate the project, and to conduct ongoing technical assistance, enhancement, and maintenance of the established environmental management system. The DEMT has representation from most city agencies and school departments.

Four statewide "Train the Trainer" sessions for schools, municipal associations and departments have been developed that include:

- 1) environmental issues in schools,
- 2) school culture and challenges to addressing environmental issues,
- 3) using a systems approach to environmental management,
- 4) potential services that municipalities have to offer,
- 5) state and federal resources, and
- 6) assisting schools in developing environmental systems.

The DEMT is organizing school environmental teams in all 21 schools and has provided a team orientation training and a training on *How to Conduct a Building Assessment for Indoor Air Quality*. Upcoming school team trainings include Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and other building assessment guidelines. Trainings scheduled this year also include department specific content for nurses, custodians, science, and technical education shops on topics like chemical management, health and safety, and Right-To-Know laws.

The DEMT has modified the Healthy School Council *MA Healthy Schools Checklist* (see page 4) as one of the instruments to identify and benchmark current environmental practices, systems and needs for use in the Newton Schools. Separate checklists were created for each school staff person and the school environmental team, each collecting different levels of information.

It's not too early to begin planning for next year's professional development!

For information about scheduling training on the *School Health Index*, contact Michelle Zbell Nadow (617-624-5537 or michelle.zbell@state.ma.us)

For information about professional development in physical education, contact Carol Goodenow (781-338-3603 or cgoodenow@doe.mass.edu).

The DEMT will work with the school environmental teams to prioritize the needs identified in the building assessments to develop environmental policies and long-term environmental plans. Then, based on the needs identified in these plans, the DEMT will provide follow-up technical assistance to the school-based environmental teams to address their specific issues.

There are a number of municipal initiatives (source reduction, recycling, chemical management, IAQ, IPM) available to the district from the City of Newton. This program provides the systems structure as a vehicle to implement them where they are most needed, and to maintain the systems once they are in place.

For more information contact the project consultant, Lynn Rose, at rose@crocker.com

AMERICAN SCHOOL HEALTH ASSOCIATION SUMMER INSTITUTE August 3-6, 2004 Boston

ASHA and the Harvard Prevention Research Center will sponsor a four-day School Health Institute this August. Participants will develop skills and strategies to create health-promoting schools and communities that support student success. School administrators, nurses, health and PE teachers and others interested in school health can obtain information or register at www.ashaweb.org/conferences.html

Early registration closes June 15; regular registration closes July 31.

In Brief: Asthma

What is asthma?*

Asthma is a chronic lung disease that affects the airways. Children with asthma have airways that are inflamed and inflamed airways are very sensitive, so they tend to react strongly to “triggers.” Triggers are either allergy-causing substances, such as dust mites, mold and pollen; or irritants, such as cigarette smoke and fumes from paint. When the airways react to a trigger, they become narrower due to swelling and squeezing of the airways by the small muscles around them. This results in less air getting through to the lungs and less air getting out. Symptoms of asthma include acute episodes of:

- Coughing
- Wheezing
- Chest tightness
- Shortness of breath

Why be concerned about asthma at school?*

Asthma is one of the leading causes of school absenteeism. Approximately 9.2 million children younger than 18 years of age have been diagnosed with asthma in their lifetime.** About three students in a classroom of 30 currently have asthma. Uncontrolled asthma can result in reduced performance for the child with asthma and disruptions for the entire classroom.

Students with asthma can function to their maximum potential if their needs are met. Benefits include better attendance, improved alertness and physical stamina, fewer symptoms, fewer restrictions on participating in physical activities and special events, and fewer medical emergencies.

Actions you can take*

You can develop an asthma management program in your school. This management plan should contain:

- 1) A confidential list of students who have asthma
- 2) School policies and procedures for emergencies and medications
- 3) Specific actions for staff members to perform in the asthma management program
- 4) A written action plan for every student with asthma
- 5) Education for staff and students about asthma

The Principal can use the Healthy Schools Checklist and work with maintenance staff and environmental specialists to set and monitor standards for school maintenance, humidity, ventilation and indoor air quality, mold, and dust control. He/she can make sure repairs and cleaning take place.

The School Nurse can provide easy access to emergency medications.

Maintenance Staff can establish and follow a regular cleaning schedule to help minimize allergen and irritant levels. Also, they can develop an Indoor Air Quality Management Plan.

**All information on this page is directly from “Managing Asthma, A Guide For Schools,” from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Dept. of Education, July 2003.*

***Natl. Health Interview Survey, Natl. Center for Health Statistics, Natl. Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2001.*

Common asthma triggers



Introducing: A new way to deal with pests! (a common asthma trigger)

The Integrated Pest Management Website

Since 2001, schools have been required by law to develop Integrated Pest Management (IPM) plans and submit them to the Department of Agricultural Resources (DAR). IPM is a pest control strategy that focuses on preventing pest problems by eliminating conditions which are favorable to the development of pests such as food, access, water, and shelter. The strategy uses a combination of pest controls such as monitoring, increased sanitation, physical barriers, natural pest enemies and pesticides. The IPM plan centralizes all of the information about a school's pest management practices, including any pest problems, pest control methods that will be used to manage pests, the names of pesticide applicators and any pesticides used.

Overall compliance with the law has been weak with only half of the schools in the state submitting plans to DAR. To both encourage and help schools develop and submit IPM plans, DAR has developed a new interactive School IPM website which is scheduled to be launched in March.

The site will provide information for parents, schools and pesticide applicators about IPM and will feature an interactive IPM plan development tool. The IPM tool will help schools develop their IPM plans and submit them to DAR electronically. Once submitted, the plans will be viewable online. The site will help pesticide applicators, school staff, parents and the general public establish if their school is in compliance with the state's IPM law.

The site is in the final stage of beta-testing and will be launched in April. Schools will be notified once the website goes live. In the interim, information is available from the School IPM link on DAR's website at www.mass.gov/agr.

http://www.ditherdog.com/dfa/dfa01/round1/dir3-1.htm - Microsoft Internet Explorer provided by EDEA

Mass.gov • mass.gov home • online services • state agencies SEARCH MASS.GOV

mdfa MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

About | Facts | Calendar | Regulations | Bureaus | Publications | Programs | Contact | New | Search | Site Map

Integrated Pest Management **Welcome!**

What is IPM?
For Schools/Daycare
For Parents
For Pest Management Professionals
Massachusetts IPM Council
Pesticide Bureau

for Schools and Daycare
Make your IPM plan online.
Get help & information.
Learn more about your responsibilities.

for Parents
Find a school's IPM plan.
Find out about IPM & pesticides.
Get IPM news & announcements.

IPM NEWS
6 JAN 2003
The Massachusetts Legislature voted to require all schools with 25 or more students to serve three pasta-based meals each week.
1 JAN 2003
The deadline for schools to

Start C... I... M... R... E... S... Si... h... h... Desktop 11:11 AM

