

Policy Gap Focused Family Profiles

Healthy Housing Briefing

Council of the District of Columbia

1350 Pennsylvania Ave NW

Washington, DC 20004

December 7, 2017 – 10 AM, Room 104

DC Family Profile 1

Age of Child: 13

Ward: 7

Summary: This family has an adolescent girl who was referred for her asthma. They live on the ground floor of a small apartment building with fewer than six residential units. The apartment complex is in very poor repair. The residential unit's wall to wall carpeting is soiled and stained. The many structural cracks and gaps make it easy for mice to come in. Mom has difficulty communicating with the landlord. The mother is not a good advocate for improving conditions in their home because of a health issue that impairs her communication with others. The family is a member of Medicaid managed care.

Policy Gap: Small landlords often don't have a large budget for maintenance or an understanding of how maintenance can affect the health of residents. Families who don't have the skills to advocate fall through the cracks and conditions in their homes go unrepaired.

Date Referred to Asthma Home Visiting Program by Children's National: 01/18/2017

DC Family Profile 2

Age of Child: 6

Ward: 7

Summary: This family has a boy who recently had an asthma attack at school and was sent to the emergency room for treatment. The family lives in a large apartment complex. The residential building was recently cited for lead contamination. Mom received her notification of potential lead hazards after the building was cited, not at the time she signed the lease. There was a mouse infestation in the building. Left unaddressed, the family patched the holes and cracks by themselves.

Policy Gaps: Legislation requiring notification of lead hazards may not be adequately enforced. Code violations of pest infestations is not always addressed effectively or promptly.

Date Referred to Asthma Home Visiting Program by Children's National: 02/21/2017

DC Family Profile 3

Age of Child: 3

Ward: 8

Summary: This family has a young toddler. The family resides in a town home style apartment building. They are sharing the unit with relatives who have the lease in their name. The units are poorly maintained, no recent painting, holes in the walls, stained carpeting, and mice. The relatives smoke inside the unit. Other tenants smoke in the common areas and entryways.

Policy Gaps: People living in homes that are owned or rented by relatives cannot report housing code violations for fear of eviction. Smoking relatives and neighbors expose asthmatic children to persistent triggers.

Date Referred to Asthma Home Visiting Program by Children's National:10/28/2016

DC Family Profile 4

Age of Child: 13

Ward: 8

Summary: This family has a teenage child. They live on the upper floor of a large apartment complex. There is a bedbug infestation within the complex. There was also a standing water problem on the property. The building sits at the bottom of a hill resulting in persistent drainage issues. The complex is currently undergoing renovation and there is a lot of noise and dust from the ongoing projects.

Policy Gaps: Landlords are sometimes reluctant to address bedbug infestations - It's expensive (approximately \$1000 per treatment). Families who report are often ostracized by management and their neighbors. Renovation and construction disrupt conditions with exposure to dust, disturbance of rodents and little oversight of construction/renovation projects.

Date Referred to Asthma Home Visiting Program from Children's National: 07/14/2017

DC Family Profile 5

Age of Child: 16

Ward: 7

Summary: This family has a teenage child with asthma. They own their home. They are underwater on the mortgage because of the mother's sudden job loss. Mom is now receiving public assistance and trying to hang on to her home. There was a 2ft by 4ft hole in the living room where the ceiling fell in from a water leak originating at the roof. Mom used all her savings to put a new roof on the home. She couldn't afford to repair the ceiling. They have mice and cockroaches.

Policy Gaps: Owner occupied housing may not be eligible for the city Healthy Housing program run by DOEE and there are few options for them for addressing health related housing hazards. Low income home owners need assistance addressing small problems that grow into larger ones.

Date Referred to Asthma Home Visiting Program by Children's National: 06/27/2017

DC Family Profile 6

Age of Children: Three children ranging from 4 – 11 years of age

Ward: 8

Summary: The family has three children with asthma of varying age. The family uses their DC Housing Choice Voucher to rent a two-story townhome style apartment. They have lived in this unit for less than a year. Their previous home was infested with roaches and mice, but they were moved because of an injury mom sustained falling down the stairs. This unit is similarly infested with cockroaches and mice.

Policy Gaps: Public housing tenants often shuttle between properties with significant pest and rodent infestations that violate existing housing codes. This is a continuing source of exposure to housing related health hazards.

Date Referred to Asthma Home Visiting Program by Children's National: 07/25/2017

DC Family Profile 7

Age of Child: 5

Ward: 5

Summary: This family has a school age child with asthma. The family is Spanish speaking. They rent a unit in a large cosmetically attractive apartment building. The home was well kept. The unit is infested with cockroaches. There were no other significant triggers.

Policy Gap: Even well maintained rental units in large apartment complexes are difficult to keep pest free because of the number of units. Unit-by-unit approach to pest management can exacerbate the severity and length of infestation. Families may be reluctant to report adverse conditions due to factors such as language or immigration status. Maintenance practices often use regular contracts with pest management companies to spray. Sprays are not as effective as integrated pest management techniques so infestations persist.

Date Referred to Asthma Home Visiting Program by Children's National: 08/31/2017

DC Family Profile 8

Age of Child: 4

Ward: 7

Summary: This family lives on the top floor of a midrise garden style apartment building. Their neighbors and neighbor's guests smoke in the common areas of the building. The lock on the front door of the apartment building has been broken for some time. This allows anyone to enter the hallway and stairwell. People smoke and loiter in these areas. The smoke travels throughout the building exposing the four-year-old to environmental tobacco smoke.

Policy Gaps: Apartment buildings without policies about smoking in common areas are sources of exposure to environmental tobacco smoke. Smoking in common areas exposes non-smokers as the smoke travels through the common areas and into other units.

Date Referred to Asthma Home Visiting Program by Children's National: 09/12/2017

DC Family Profile 9

Age of Child: 5

Ward: 8

Summary: This family has a school age child with asthma. The home is a ground floor unit in a small apartment building. There have been 3 leaks in the past two years from the HVAC system. The leaks wet the carpeting which has not been replaced or addressed. The HVAC system works poorly – the unit is hot in the summer and cold in the winter. Neighbors smoke in the common areas and the smoke travels into this unit.

Policy Gaps: Despite many complaints by this family, the HVAC system remains in poor condition contributing to moist conditions in the home that could develop into mold. Wet carpeting was not replaced. Smoking in the common areas is an ongoing exposure to environmental tobacco smoke.

Date Referred to Asthma Home Visiting Program by Children's National: 01/04/2017

DC Family Profile 10

Age of Child: 17

Ward: 8

Summary: This family has a teenage child with asthma. They live in a run-down public housing complex that is slated for renovation soon. There are chronic cockroach infestations. There were mice but the tenants worked hard to patch all holes in the interior and this was successful in ridding their unit of mice. The complex property is overrun with cats and rats. Many people have obtained cats to help with the mice and the rats.

Policy Gap: Some public housing complexes have longstanding problems with rodents, both mice in the interiors and rats in the exterior spaces. Patching of interior spaces can be a successful strategy for eliminating mice. This must be paired with replacement of carpeting to eliminate ongoing exposure to urine-soaked areas that will continue to expose children to allergens. Rat infestations in neighborhoods need more effective remediation strategies that will require coordination between regulatory agencies, public health officials, tenants and building managers.

Date Referred to Asthma Home Visiting Program by Children's National: 02/23/2017