



Healthy Home, Healthy Child: The Westside Children's Asthma Partnership

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Healthy Home, Healthy Child: Serving Chicago's Westside

Faced with the overwhelmingly high rates of pediatric asthma in the area surrounding Sinai Health System, the Sinai Urban Health Institute (SUHI) team developed Healthy Home, Healthy Child: The Westside Children's Asthma Partnership (HHHC). Building upon lessons learned through three earlier asthma interventions, HHHC aims to combat asthma on both a community and an individual level. HHHC implements a Community Health Worker (CHW) model that hires and trains passionate residents from the target community and then sends them to residents' homes to educate caregivers and children on asthma management and triggers. Since its inception in September 2008, HHHC has impacted the lives of 230 families. The CHWs also function as liaisons between the families and their primary care providers and make referrals to HHHC's partnership organizations, the Metropolitan Tenants Organization (MTO), Health and Disability Advocates (HDA), and Sinai Community Institute (SCI). These agencies help to resolve housing issues and provide pro bono legal assistance to families with a wide range of legal concerns.



The HHHC team has been tirelessly recruiting children (ages 2-14) with severe asthma since December 2008 and will continue to enroll participants until July of 2010. Any child between the ages of 2 to 14 years who lives on the Westside of Chicago (in zip codes: 60608, 60612, 60623, 60624, 60639, 60644, 60651) and who has asthma can be considered for this study. Once enrolled, families receive 6 individualized education sessions from their CHW over the course of one year, as well as asthma management devices and asthma-friendly products for their home. HHHC recently reached a major milestone with the first family completing the entire 12-month intervention phase. This was a huge accomplishment for SUHI and particularly for Rhonda Lay, the CHW working with this family. A brief summary of this family's journey is provided later in this newsletter.

HHHC: Meeting Community Needs

ABOUT HEALTHY HOME, HEALTHY CHILD:

Awarded in September 2008, HHHC is funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The program's goal is to reduce asthma-related illness and death and improve quality of life, through a meaningful collaboration with the community.

To insure that the HHHC team is continually refining its approach to meeting the needs program participants, we rely on our Community Advisory Board (CAB) to communicate regularly with the community. The CAB was created by the Sinai Community Institute (SCI) and the Chicago Asthma Consortium (CAC), who built upon their strong community connections to assemble a group of dedicated and compassionate leaders from the Westside of Chicago. Members of the CAB include parents and caregivers of children who have asthma; leaders of local community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, schools, local business; and other members of the community committed to the fight against asthma on the Westside. The CAB ensures that the community has input into the development and implementation of the HHHC program. The CAB is lead by Co-chairs, Gloria Jenkins-Harvey, Executive Director, Westside Association for Community Action, and Dr. Rev. Carolyn Vessel, CEO/President of I AM ABLE Center for Family Development. Under the guidance of the Co-chairs, the CAB has created a policy and legislation committee, a sustainability committee, a client participant committee, and a board participation committee. These subcommittees are charged with enhancing community and board involvement as well as ensuring future sustainability of the HHHC project. The support and voices of all members of the CAB are invaluable in engaging the community's participation to help children and their caregivers better manage asthma.

THERE IS STILL AN OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS UNIQUE AND SUCCESSFUL ASTHMA PROGRAM. IF YOU KNOW A CHILD WITH ASTHMA LIVING ON THE WESTSIDE OF CHICAGO, REFER THEM TO THE *HEALTHY HOME, HEALTHY CHILD* ASTHMA PROGRAM BY CALLING JEANETTE AVILA AT (773) 257-1031.

A Personal and Project Milestone:

When Healthy Home, Healthy Child's (HHHC) Community Health Worker Rhonda Lay met Rosemary McNeal one year ago, Mrs. McNeal had recently started to care for her four grandchildren. She was still adjusting to the change and was having some difficulty managing the care of her nine-year-old grandson, Geoni, who suffers from asthma and epilepsy. As a Community Health Worker, Rhonda was charged with the task of assessing the home environment for possible asthma triggers, referring the family to partnership programs that would benefit them, and educating Mrs. McNeal and Geoni so they could better manage his asthma. Because the HHHC intervention takes place in the participant's home, Rhonda and Mrs. McNeal would need to become very open and comfortable with each other in a short period of time. "The protocol is the same for everyone, but each family is different so I have to be flexible in the way I work with each family," says Rhonda. "My goal for everyone is to get them to understand how serious asthma can be, while also letting them know that a child with asthma can lead a normal life if they manage their condition properly."



*Rhonda Lay
Community Health Worker*

"I felt really happy that even after the program ended she was able to talk to me about a problem, but mostly I was happy that she had the tools to handle the problem largely on her own."- Rhonda Lay

Mrs. McNeal says she knew about asthma before the HHHC program, but that Rhonda "showed me a lot that I didn't know, quite a few things actually!" Rhonda taught Mrs. McNeal which things in her home were contributing to Geoni's asthma, how to clean her house with "asthma-friendly" products, and even referred her to a lawyer from the Health and Disability Advocates who is working on getting Geoni disability benefits for his epilepsy. Mrs. McNeal says that Rhonda took the time to explain things to her and that she always felt comfortable having Rhonda in her home. Since the beginning of the intervention, Mrs. McNeal bought all new furniture to replace the potentially harmful cloth furniture (which can harbor dust mites) that she owned, as well as instituted a weekly house-cleaning time with the grandkids to continually monitor the home for possible asthma triggers. Before they joined HHHC, Mrs. McNeal says Geoni was having monthly asthma attacks that, more than half the time, required a trip to the emergency room. Since meeting with Rhonda, Geoni's asthma is largely managed at home and he has not had an attack in over three months.

The self-empowering techniques taught by Rhonda have paid off in many ways. Recently, after the final 12-month meeting had taken place, Rhonda had to stop by Mrs. McNeal's home to collect some paperwork. Mrs. McNeal told Rhonda that during her weekly house inspection she discovered bed bugs, a topic which Rhonda discussed with her. Mrs. McNeal said she was so thankful that she was able to handle the situation. She immediately purchased new beds, laundered all her linens, contacted her landlord, received products to rid the home of the pests, and put the mattress and pillow covers Rhonda had given her on her new mattresses. This was just the sort of proactive reaction Rhonda had hoped for. "I felt really happy that even after the program ended she was able to talk to me about a problem, but mostly I was happy that she had the tools to handle the problem largely on her own."

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