

Pioneer Valley Asthma Coalition

Working to improve the quality of life for individuals, families and communities affected by asthma.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: April 15, 2015

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**Collaboration of local agencies to tackle housing related health problems
Agencies join together to form Springfield Healthy Homes Collaborative**

Springfield, MA (DATE, 2015) – Ten local organizations and city departments have joined together in a city-wide collaboration to further address the health issues faced by residents due to poor housing conditions. Asthma, elderly falls and lead paint poisoning are illnesses that can be prevented by home repairs.

“Springfield has one of the highest asthma rates in the state” according to Dr. Matthew Sadof, chair of the Pioneer Valley Asthma Coalition, and coordinator of this project. “Our efforts to help children with asthma are hindered when there are underlying conditions in their homes that exacerbate their asthma—conditions like mold, due to leaks and faulty ventilation. Healthy Homes' interventions have been shown to reduce asthma attacks and improve health outcomes.”

The program's first activity will be a Housing and Health workshop at the Renter Nation Assembly on May 9, at Christ Church Cathedral, 132 Chestnut in Springfield.

The agencies involved include: Arise for Social Justice, Baystate High Street Pediatrics, HAP Housing, Mason Square Health Task Force, Revitalize CDC, Partners for a Healthier Community, Springfield Office of Housing, Springfield Health & Human Services, Springfield Partners for Community Action and Bay Path University Occupational Therapy Department.

The Springfield Healthy Homes Collaborative's activities will include Healthy Homes training for health care, housing and other providers; housing forums to gather information on community concerns about housing and educate residents about Healthy Housing principles as well as development of a new coordinated referral system for concerns related to housing and health. This project will also pilot asthma home visiting and repairs in the Mason Square area using the new coordinated system.

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“The Springfield Office of Housing is eager to work with this collaborative to find ways we can support improvement of housing in Springfield”, noted Gerry McCafferty, director of the Springfield Office of Housing. “We recognize the health impacts of poor housing and are pleased to see local agencies coming together to find creative solutions to housing issues that impact health.”

“An estimated 40% of homes have substantial health and safety issues. In addition, this winter has been hard on homes, causing ice dams that might have led to water leaks and mold problems,” noted MaryBeth Smuts, Regional Air Toxicologist for the EPA Region 1.

This project is supported by an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving (EJCPS) Cooperative Agreement. This competitive program provides funding for non-profit and tribal organizations to partner with stakeholders from across industry, government, and academia to develop and implement solutions that significantly address environmental and/ or public health issues in American communities. Environmental justice is defined as the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of race or income, in the environmental decision-making process. These awards represent EPA’s commitment to promoting localized, community-based actions to address environmental justice issues.

About the Pioneer Valley Asthma Coalition and Partners for a Healthier Community

The Pioneer Valley Asthma Coalition (PVAC) is a coalition of health professionals and institutions, community groups and residents, public health organizations, municipal and state agencies, academic institutions, schools, day care, housing and environmental groups committed to improving asthma and environmental conditions that affect health in Western Massachusetts. www.pvasthmacoalition.org PVAC is convened by **Partners for a Healthier Community (PHC)**. **PHC** is a non-profit, public health institute committed to improving the public's health by fostering innovation, leveraging resources, and building partnerships across sectors, including government agencies, communities, the health care delivery system, media, and academia. PHC uses a collaborative programming approach to solve pressing community health issues. www.partnersforahealthiercommunity.org