



National Safe and Healthy Housing Coalition

Greetings,

STEERING COMMITTEE

- American Public Health Association
- American Society of Home Inspectors
- Baltimore City Health Department
- Children's Health Forum
- Enterprise Community Partners
- Habitat for Humanity International
- Houston Department of Health and Human Services
- Indoor Air Quality Association
- International Code Council
- National Center for Healthy Housing, Chair
- National Coalition to End Childhood Lead Poisoning
- National Low Income Housing Coalition
- NeighborWorks America
- Rebuilding Together
- Safe Kids Worldwide
- U.S. Green Building Council

We invite you to join our collaborative efforts to create safer and healthier homes, especially for low-income families, throughout the U.S. through education and outreach to key national stakeholders and federal public decision-makers.

We are building on efforts from the inaugural May 7, 2009 *National Healthy Housing Summit* in which leaders of 40 prominent nonprofits and experts in housing, public health, energy efficiency, environmental health, and tenants' rights came together to develop the first *National Healthy Housing Action Plan*. Following the recommendations of the Summit participants, the National Center for Healthy Housing launched the National Safe and Healthy Housing Coalition in 2009 to create safe and healthy homes for all people in the U.S. The first annual National Safe and Healthy Housing Coalition meeting took place in May 2010, and the results of this meeting formed the basis on the Coalition's current policy agenda. The Coalition creates an annual policy agenda and continues to bring leaders from all sectors together to improve housing conditions nationwide, offering educational, networking, and advocacy opportunities to its members. The Coalition's policy agenda is included on page 3 of this document.

Low-income families, the elderly, and people of color continue to bear a disproportionate burden of unhealthy housing conditions, including lead-based paint, pesticide misuse, broken heating systems, rodents, leaking water pipes, inoperable smoke alarms, and asthma triggers such as mold and roaches. These dangerous and unhealthy housing conditions not only cause millions of illnesses and injuries, but they cost billions of dollars in health care treatments and lost productivity. Although the concept of healthy housing has been around since the 19th century's promotion of "sanitary housing," the many nonprofits working to improve housing conditions in their communities have never banded together to make safe and healthy affordable housing a **national** priority – until now.

Please find the enclosed information about the National Safe and Healthy Housing Coalition's mission and activities. We hope you will add your voice and join our collaborative effort to create safer and healthier homes for all families.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Morley
Coalition Chair and Exec. Dir., National Center for Healthy Housing

Enclosures

Thank you for your interest in joining the National Safe and Healthy Housing Coalition. As a member, we will invite you to all meetings, update you regularly, and provide access to new resources. Most important, we will periodically offer you the opportunity to review, comment on, and participate in (always on an “opt-in” basis) communications, briefings, meetings and other activities with key national stakeholders, federal agencies, Congress and other decision-makers on important and timely issues.

Your membership is entirely voluntary. No dues are assessed. We adhere to a written set of Coalition Guidelines www.nchh.org/Portals/0/Contents/Coalition_Guidelines_10-20-09.pdf. Your participation confers no legal rights or obligations, and you may end your membership at any time.

To join, please visit http://capwiz.com/nchh/mlm/signup/?ignore_cookie=1 to fill out the membership form. If you have any questions about membership, please contact Ruth Lindberg at rlindberg@nchh.org or 202-280-1983.

Thank you for your interest and support!

MISSION, PRIORITIES AND PARTICIPATION

The National Safe and Healthy Housing Coalition is a broad, voluntary, non-dues coalition of organizations working to improve housing conditions nationwide, especially for low-income families, through education and outreach to key national stakeholders and federal public decision-makers. Guided by a 16-member Provisional Steering Committee (listed above) that is chaired by the National Center for Healthy Housing, the Coalition's primary mission is to implement the most promising and realistic recommendations for a *National Healthy Housing Action Plan* that emanated from the first-ever National Healthy Housing Summit, held in Washington, D.C. on May 7, 2009. The Coalition's current policy priorities include:

Healthy Housing Standards

1. Create standards for building materials and indoor exposure.
2. Amend the International Code Council (ICC) model housing and building codes to prevent radon exposure in new homes, unsafe renovation work, and moldy building materials.
3. Deliver funding for code administration (enactment and enforcement) to fortify local agencies' capacity.
4. Begin the development of minimum federal healthy housing standards.
5. Explore requirements at turnover and sale for property owners to meet healthy housing standards and disclose known hazards.
6. Support improvements to and industry compliance with EPA's and states' renovation program (RRP).

Financing Healthy Homes

1. Pass Senator Jack Reed's and Congressman Robert Brady's Safe and Healthy Housing Act and Healthy Housing Council Act.
2. Fully fund the National Housing Trust Fund and support other mechanisms for financing affordable healthy housing.
3. Incorporate housing quality into legislation supporting livable communities and sustainability.
4. Encourage Medicaid, private insurer, and other health sector support for healthy homes activities, including assessments and interventions.
5. Sustain and expand funding for the HUD's Healthy Homes Program to expand the number of healthy homes created nationwide, and for CDC's Healthy Homes appropriation to transition local programs from lead poisoning prevention alone to healthy homes.

Integrating Energy Efficiency and Health

1. Incentivize flexible use of categorical funding programs to advance energy, home repair, and health and safety goals. For example, with 15% flexibility, the Weatherization Assistance Program and the Lead Hazard Control Program could address basic safety and health hazards.
2. Incorporate healthy homes recommendations into bills and regulations to advance residential energy efficiency, such as minimum standards for health and safety for home energy retrofits in Home Star and similar programs.

The Steering Committee has formed three Working Groups, which are pursuing: legislative/regulatory strategies, healthy homes standards, and collaboration/partnership opportunities to advance its policy agenda.

What's Involved in Participating

Steering Committee meetings, held every 4-6 weeks, are open to all Coalition members and occasionally have a national or federal guest speaker related to the Coalition's priorities. The workgroups hold conference calls between the meetings to pursue these and related priorities, and are likewise open to all Coalition members. Updates to all Coalition members, often with "opt-in" action items for their consideration, are sent periodically. The next full Coalition event is planned for the summer of 2012.

WHY FOCUS ON SAFE AND HEALTHY HOUSING?

Some Housing in the U.S. Rivals the Developing World's

The home is the most dangerous place for U.S. families, according to CDC injury and illness data. An estimated 5.7 million families in the U.S. live in housing that rivals developing countries, with broken heating and plumbing, holes in walls and windows, roaches, rats, falling plaster, and leaking roofs. Millions more in all 50 states live in housing with serious health and safety hazards from mold, exposed wiring, radon, unvented heaters, toxic chemicals, broken stairs, and missing smoke detectors, according to the *State of the Nation's Healthy Housing* (see www.nchh.org).

Unhealthy Housing Causes Millions of Illnesses and Injuries and Costs Taxpayers Billions

Lead Poisoning: An estimated 250,000 children have blood lead levels greater than CDC's level of concern; millions more have levels high enough to cause irreparable harm. About 24 million homes have lead-based paint which, when combined with other environmental toxins, cause lead poisoning, cancer, and other illnesses and results in \$52.9 billion in annual costs.

Asthma from Mold, Roaches and other Triggers: Of the 22.9 million Americans with asthma (the most prevalent chronic childhood illness), about 4.6 million cases are caused by mold, mildew, roaches, mice, dust mites, cleaning agents, and other triggers. These largely preventable cases result in \$3.5 billion/year in treatment and related costs (e.g., missed work/school days), according to the Institutes of Medicine.

Cancer: Radon is the leading cause of lung cancer among non-smokers and kills approximately 21,000 annually (more than drunk driving), according to the EPA. Pesticide exposure in and around the home only increases these cancer risks.

Unintentional Injuries: About half of all injuries – from falls, fires, poisonings, scaldings and other hazards – occur in and around the home and cost \$222 billion in direct medical expenses each year, according to CDC and others.

Children, the Elderly and Other Vulnerable Populations Suffer the Most

Low-income families, minorities, children and the elderly suffer disproportionately from substandard housing, 95% of which are private rental units or owner-occupied houses, according to the American Housing Survey and other sources.

Simple Fixes Save Many Lives, Avoid Countless Illnesses/Injuries and Save Billions

Nearly all of these hazards have cost-effective and often simple fixes. For example:

- **Asthma:** A home assessment, asthma and trigger avoidance education, and reducing home-based triggers (e.g., closed food containers, mattress/pillow encasements and HEPA vacuum filters) significantly improves patient health and greatly reduces treatment costs.
- **Falls:** Replacing missing stair handrails, repairing slippery flooring, broken steps and inadequate lighting, and adding grab bars and baby safety gates save many lives and limbs.