



Pennsylvania Healthy Housing Fact Sheet

The home is the most dangerous place for U.S. families.ⁱ Nearly six million families live in housing rivaling that of developing countries, with broken heating and plumbing, holes in walls and windows, roach and rodent infestation, falling plaster, crumbling foundations, and leaking roofs. Millions more in all 50 states live in housing with serious health and safety hazards, including mold, exposed wiring, radon, unvented heaters, toxic chemicals, broken stairs, missing smoke detectors, and other hazards.ⁱⁱ Home-based interventions to address health hazards improve health and have a large return on investment: Each dollar invested in lead paint hazard control results in a return of \$17 to \$221,ⁱⁱⁱ and each dollar invested in asthma home-based interventions that include education and remediation results in a return of \$5.30 to \$14.00.^{iv}

The need in Pennsylvania

Thirty-three percent of children in Pennsylvania live in households with high housing cost burden, and 20% of children in Pennsylvania live in poverty.^v Pennsylvania's housing stock is some of the oldest in the nation: Approximately 40% of Pennsylvania's housing units were built before 1950 and are likely to contain lead-based paint. In Philadelphia, approximately 95% of housing stock was built before 1978.^{vi} These factors make Pennsylvania a high housing hazard state. Unhealthy housing conditions can lead to lead poisoning, injuries, and asthma and other respiratory problems. These health problems in turn result in missed school days and poor school performance for children, as well as missed work days for parents.

The need for funding

To protect the health of Pennsylvania families and prevent continued increases in associated healthcare costs and societal consequences, full funding in FY 2016 and beyond is needed for the following:

- ✓ **CDC's Healthy Homes and Lead Poisoning Prevention Program = \$29,257,000**
- ✓ **CDC's National Asthma Control Program = \$30,596,000**
- ✓ **HUD's Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes = \$120,000,000**

Funding for healthy housing in Pennsylvania

- Since 1999, eligible cities, counties, and qualifying nonprofits have received \$83,303,684 in funding from HUD's Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes for lead hazard reduction, healthy homes production, and education and outreach activities. From this total:
 - One grant of \$3 million to the City of Erie was made in 2013; no grants were awarded within the state of Pennsylvania in 2014.^{vii, viii}
- Pennsylvania has received a total of \$16,040,447 in funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Healthy Homes and Lead Poisoning Prevention and National Asthma Control programs from FY05 – FY14. Of this funding:
 - Pennsylvania has received a total of \$11,929,485 from the Healthy Homes and Lead Poisoning Prevention Program, including one award to the City of Philadelphia

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Department of Public Health for \$291,972 for lead poisoning prevention activities in FY14.

- The Pennsylvania State Department of Health has received a total of \$4,110,962 in funding for asthma-related activities, including \$706,801 in FY14.
- The Pennsylvania Department of Health has been funded by CDC's National Asthma Control Program since 2003.^{ix}

Childhood lead poisoning

- In 2012, 13,890 of the children tested in Pennsylvania had an elevated blood lead level, which is five or more micrograms of lead per deciliter of blood ($\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$); 2,315 of them had blood lead levels of 10 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ or more.^x
- In 2013, Lehigh County had the highest percentage of children tested with elevated blood lead levels of 5 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ or more of all Pennsylvania counties at 22.96% of children tested (836 children). Berks and Lehigh counties were the only two among the 10 highest for both testing numbers and percentages of children tested with elevated blood lead levels of 5 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ or more.^{xi}

Asthma^{xii}

- Approximately 877,000 adults (10%) and 274,000 children (10%) in Pennsylvania had current asthma in 2012.
- Statewide in 2012, there were over 20,000 inpatient hospitalizations due to asthma, a rate of 15.7 per 10,000 residents.
 - The rate for children under age five was 43.8 per 10,000, the highest of any age group.
- The cost for asthma-related hospitalizations (not including physician charges) was approximately \$518 million.

Radon

- According to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, Pennsylvania has one of the most serious radon problems in the country. An estimated 40% of Pennsylvania homes have radon levels above EPA's action guideline of 4 pCi/L.^{xiii}

Carbon monoxide deaths

- There were 689 deaths due to carbon monoxide exposure from 2000 to 2007.^{xiv}

Injury-related deaths

- For every 100,000 persons in Pennsylvania, there were 32.19 unintentional injury deaths caused by dangers other than automobile-related issues.^{xv}

National rankings

- NCHH's 2013 *State of Healthy Housing* report ranks 45 metropolitan statistical areas according to healthy housing related data in the American Housing Survey. The state of Pennsylvania has two cities included in the report: Pittsburgh ranked 24th and was categorized as having "fair" healthy

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housing characteristics; Philadelphia ranked 39th and was categorized as having “most unhealthy” healthy housing characteristics.^{xvi}

- The Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America’s listing of “Asthma Capitals” for 2014 ranks the 100 largest U.S. metro areas to identify the “most challenging places to live with asthma.” The state of Pennsylvania has three cities in the within the 10 most challenging: Philadelphia (5th), Allentown (12th), and Pittsburgh (15th). Two additional cities are included in the top 50: Harrisburg (37th) and Scranton (47th).^{xvii}

Healthcare financing for healthy homes^{xviii}

The National Center for Healthy Housing’s November 2014 [study](#) regarding state Medicaid reimbursement policies for environmental health services in the homes of people with asthma and children exposed to lead shows that in [Pennsylvania](#) some level of Medicaid reimbursement is in place for activities related to lead, but none is in place for activities related to asthma; no efforts to further explore reimbursement were identified.¹

Opportunities for Pennsylvania to improve reimbursement of environmental health services further include:

- Effecting coverage for home-based asthma services that address environmental triggers in the home environment.
- Ensuring that services and supports are included to eliminate or reduce exposure to asthma triggers or lead hazards identified in the home environment.

For additional information, please contact

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¹ Note: (a) These are self-reported results that have not been independently verified; (b) the existence of a policy does NOT mean that services are actually being delivered on the ground.