



# Healthy Housing Efforts in Rhode Island



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# Today's Presentation



1. Brief Timeline
2. HH efforts
3. Summary of the RI experience

# Timeline



- 2003: RI Department of Health's strategic plan adopted an objective on Healthy Places
- 2004: Lead Program issues the Elimination Plan and strengthens partnership with the state's Housing Resources Commission
- 2005: Get a small group to talk about healthy housing, which eventually became the statewide HH Collaborative

# Timeline



- 2005: Lead Hazard Mitigation Law is implemented and expands authority to mitigate rental property (proactive approach)
- 2007: White paper on healthy housing is jointly released by the Department of Health and the Housing Resources Commission
- 2007: HH Collaborative strengthens its composition including asthma, housing and other environmental partners

# Timeline



- 2007: The RI Department of Health forms and recognizes a HH Steering Committee
- 2007: HHSC is charged to set a workplan and to move HH agenda with supports from the HH Collaborative
- 2008: Variety of efforts and partners working together



**What we have done so far?**

# Healthy Housing Collaborative



- Started in 2005 with a dozen partners
- Has about 70 members
- Has been active for over 3 years
- Forum for discussion, ideas, accomplishments, promote HH goals
- Community expectations and support
- Wide range of skills and collaborations



# Training to Nursing Schools



- Began by one local college requesting 30 minute update about the Lead Program
- Expanded to other programs in the Department of Health
- The Lead Program proposed to include other MCH topics
- Then developed a Healthy Housing program
- Now offered to all 4 large nursing programs in the state
- Offered 8 times a year

# Data Collection through Partners



- Evolved from the home visiting programs “Family Assessment” paper form
- Environmental health risks questions developed
- Collection of data began with home visitors at high risk newborn visits in mid 2006
- Data available for over 2 years
- Expanded to Head Start agencies, Lead Centers
- Currently revising questionnaire
- Findings were not statistically significant
- Further analysis ongoing

# Steering Committee



- Significant internal reorganization
- Divisions merged
- Lead program's senior group suggested formulation of a Steering Committee at the RI Department of Health to promote HH agenda
- Established in mid 2007
- Group charged with the HH responsibility
- Works with the HH Collaborative
- Provides a structure/leadership for HH

# Outreach to Judges



- Proposed by a community lawyer working on environmental justice issues
- Supported by Steering Committee
- Met with District Court judges – Accepted!
- Developed a resource binder (HH terminology, definitions, resources, local laws related to HH)
- Conducted in September 07
- Offered to other attorneys

# Making a Home Healthy



- Weatherization, Lead Hazard Reduction Program (HUD) and Community Development Block Grant funds, City government
- 1935, 3-bedroom, single family dwelling, owned by a single, pregnant woman with two children, identified via WIC
- Numerous, life-threatening hazards and energy problems in the home
- Aligned funding from the 3 sources and coordinated with the family
- Took time but was completed in early 2008

# HH Training



- Use skills/expertise from NCHH
- Brought trainers to RI
- NCHH offered training
- Case managers, inspectors, weatherization staff, home visitors, nurses, advocates, outreach workers
- 2006 and 2007
- ~60 individuals trained

# Annual HH Conference



- Transformed from the annual Lead Poisoning Prevention Conference
- Set precedent.... will take place every year
- Issue publication: HH Databook
- Ask director to state the vision for HH
- Get more partners involved
- Present awards in partnership with other agencies
- Follow up!!

# Partnership with SmartGrowRI



- SmartGrow responsible for Land Use 2025 plan
- Hold a summit every 2 years
- Became a sponsor of their 2006 summit
- Planned together the 2008 summit
- Brought HH conference keynote speaker to a plenary session of the Smartgrow summit
- Negotiated free registration for our partners from the HH Collaborative
- Brought other presenters to some workshops



# HH Story and Campaign



- Use the storytelling strategy
- Two local story tellers
- Develop a HH tale easy to understand
- Any audience
- Use the 7 steps to healthy housing
- Send to all schools and promote activities/contents with their students and invite them to present their projects at the annual conference
- Complement with more info on the website and additional materials for family (bookmarks)

# HH Outreach



- Expanded outreach
- Educational materials developed: mold, radon, bed bugs, carbon monoxide, mercury
- Distribution through web site, online ordering
- Visits to pediatric providers, libraries, hardware stores (along with lead screening info)
- Don't spread lead DVD to all renovators/remodelers classes
- As a rule, we now include other environmental info in our regular outreach



**In summary....**

# Key achievements



- HH vision [www.health.ri.gov/healthyhousing](http://www.health.ri.gov/healthyhousing)
- HH databook
- HH conference
- HH stakeholders presentation
- Multi-tiered marketing strategy to promote HH

# Other Efforts in Progress



- Housing issues affecting refugees
- Energy subcommittee - CO
- Work with schools on HH projects
- HH inspections
- Work with minimum housing officials to send referrals for issues identified in HH inspections
- Regulating home inspections
- Statewide housing database

# Ingredients for Success



- Lead Program (CLPPP) is a foundation
- Expand Lead efforts to make them HH efforts
- A few (ready) partners to help you at the beginning
- An external group to support your efforts
- Market your audiences one at a time (offer training, get data, have a name, issue reports)
- Must collaborate!
- HH can be overwhelming but.... if you don't start, you won't get there

# What Do We Need?



- Additional research, policies, support
- Federal agencies working closer
- Develop HH benchmarks to measure progress
- Funding with fewer restrictions and requiring strong collaborations
- National forums
- Training, support, technical assistance
- Continued dialogue



**Feel free to contact us for more information!**

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