



NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP FOR ACTION

to End Health Disparities



Housing and Health

The physical environment in which we live, learn, work and play affects our health. In comparison to white Americans, African Americans and Latinos have a higher risk of poor health due to inadequate housing and other sub-standard environmental conditions.¹ Having adequate housing refers to housing that protects individuals and families from harmful exposures and provides them with a sense of privacy, security, stability and control. It is important for communities to address and improve those external conditions because housing is linked to health.

Housing Impacts Health

Poor quality and inadequate housing contributes to health problems such as infectious and chronic diseases (e.g. asthma), injuries and poor childhood development (e.g. lead poisoning).

The American Lung Association (ALA) found that asthma is the leading cause of chronic illness among children because asthma accounts for 14.4 million lost school days in children annually. It accounts for an estimated 3 million lost workdays for adults (ALA).

Who is Affected?

Anyone can be affected, but African American and Latinos are more likely to experience unhealthy and unsafe housing due to factors such as their race/ethnicity, gender, education level, socioeconomic status, geographic location, or disability status.

No evidence-based studies have been done linking unhealthy housing to asthma in Region 8, but data in the County Health Rankings & Roadmaps suggests that unhealthy housing could be a problem linked to asthma for African Americans and Latinos in our Region.

Facts about Asthma, 2014²

- Asthma affects an estimated 7.1 million children under 18 years.
- Asthma is the third leading cause of hospitalization among children under the age of 15 years.

Annual Healthcare Cost of Asthma

Direct healthcare cost of asthma: approximately \$50.1 billion
 +
 Indirect healthcare cost of asthma (e.g. lost productivity): approximately \$5.9 billion
 =
 Approximately \$56 billion

Percent of Severe Housing Problems* (US Median 14%), 2015³

	State Median	State Minimum	State Maximum
Colorado	17%	7%	28%
Montana	15%	5%	22%
North Dakota	11%	5%	23%
South Dakota	12%	4%	42%
Utah	16%	10%	26%
Wyoming	12%	6%	22%

* % of households with overcrowding, high housing costs, or lack of kitchen or plumbing facilities

Take Action

- Share stories and best practices about housing and health on blogs, Facebook, and Twitter
- Engage in service projects focused on housing as a factor that influences health
- Provide information on the dangers of lead-based paint and other indoor allergens
- Take part in your local community association meetings

¹ Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. "Issue Brief #7: Exploring the Social Determinants of Health. Housing and Health". 2011. http://www.rwjf.org/content/dam/farm/reports/issue_briefs/2011/rwjf70451 Accessed April 12, 2016.

² American Lung Association: Asthma & Children Fact Sheet. 2014. <http://www.lung.org/lung-health-and-diseases/lung-disease-lookup/asthma/learn-about-asthma/asthma-children-facts-sheet.html> Accessed April 12, 2016.

³ Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. County Health Rankings Available at <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/>

