

# Ohio School Asthma Initiative



Hello.

A recent study of Ohio schools (CASE-Ohio, 2011) revealed a startling statistic. Although 13% of students report a doctor has told them they have asthma (consistent with state prevalence estimates), 37% of undiagnosed students exhibit symptoms of the disease. This means over one third of Ohio school children may experience coughing, wheezing, and difficulty breathing on a regular basis. This kind of a problem has its effect on absenteeism and on children's ability to learn while in school.

Asthma is the leading cause of school absenteeism due to chronic illness and results in an estimated 13 million lost school days per year. School officials have some control over helping to decrease this absenteeism rate by evaluating and improving the school environment for children with asthma and those with asthma symptoms.

When asthma is under control, children with asthma should be able to live active, normal lives. Controlling asthma takes a combined effort from the student, family, doctor and learning environment. While properly prescribed and administered medications can help to control asthma, another major factor in controlling asthma is the identification and avoidance of asthma triggers in the environment. Because students spend so much time at school, improving the environment is important in helping students with asthma control their symptoms.

## Schools can also help by:

- Identifying students with asthma and making sure the school has accurate information about medication and asthma triggers. Asthma Action Plans (AAPs) are recommended standard forms from a student's doctor that gives student specific treatment information
- Training staff and students about how to recognize if someone is having trouble with asthma and how to help them in an emergency
- Promoting physical activity and team participation for students with asthma
- Providing a healthy environment that minimizes asthma triggers and maximizes indoor air quality
- Engaging with medical providers and the community to provide necessary support for students with asthma

The Ohio Department of Health and the Ohio Asthma Coalition, along with representatives from major educational organizations, have partnered to design a comprehensive school asthma initiative that provides information and tools for addressing asthma in schools. This brochure introduces the program. Please take a few minutes to complete the enclosed assessment of your school(s) (p. 2-3) and to review what resources are available to assist you in making your school more asthma-friendly (p. 4). The initiative is divided into components with different levels of implementation depending on your needs and resources.

We would appreciate your filling out the accompanying postage paid card and returning it to the Ohio Department of Health. The information will help the Department further plan its work on this project. There is also an opportunity on the card for you to request that someone contact you to answer any questions you may have or to discuss how we might be of assistance to you in making your school more asthma-friendly.

Sincerely,

**Thomas Ash**  
Director of Government Relations  
Buckeye Association of  
School Administrators

**James J. Harbuck**  
Executive Director  
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## MANAGING YOUR SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT CAN IMPROVE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE:

A structured maintenance program is a cornerstone of academic performance and indoor air quality. With tight operating budgets, school boards and administrators often consider the maintenance budget as soft money, an expense that they can cut without affecting core academic program needs. However, the literature demonstrates otherwise, with several studies finding that health attendance and academic performance improve with increased maintenance. Furthermore schools with better physical conditions show improved academic performance.

From *How Does Indoor Air Quality Impact Student Health and Academic Performance? The Case for Comprehensive IAQ Management in Schools*. USEPA, 2010



Complete the assessment tool on the next two pages to identify areas where the School Asthma Initiative may be able to assist you in better serving your students with asthma. For those items marked “not yet” or “in process” please see the corresponding color coded section on the back page for resources and tools you may find helpful.

		CHECK APPROPRIATE COLUMN		
A.	PROVIDING SCHOOL DISTRICT LEADERSHIP	NOT YET	IN PROCESS	YES
1	The superintendent is an advocate for asthma management.			
2	The building principal is an advocate for asthma management.			
3	Asthma management is recognized by school school leaders as a possible way to improve attendance, grades and graduation rates.			
4	The Board of Education has adopted policies to address among students with asthma and other chronic diseases, which may include:			
4a	Permitting students with a doctor's note and appropriate training to carry inhalers.			
4b	Designating a school staff member to coordinate asthma wellness activities.			
4c	Assigning asthma wellness roles for school health-care staff that are consistent with best practices and relevant national standards.			
4d	Ensuring that qualified staff members are available to implement asthma action plans and to provide asthma-related health-care services, including quick-relief medication, to children in school or at school-related activities.			
5	School leaders ensure that systems and procedures are in place to collect data about students with asthma, including data about:			
5a	Absenteeism.			
5b	Visits to the health office.			
5c	Non-participation in physical education.			
5d	Asthma attacks on campus or at a school activity.			
5e	911 or other emergency calls related to asthma attacks.			
5f	Students sent home early because of asthma symptoms.			
B.	IDENTIFYING AND MONITORING STUDENTS WITH ASTHMA	NOT YET	IN PROCESS	YES
1	Designated staff members are offered the opportunity for training to identify students with asthma.			
2	At the beginning of each school year, parents or guardians are asked to complete (and regularly update) a form used to identify their child's:			
2a	Chronic health problems.			
2b	Emergency care needs and history.			
2c	Medications.			
2d	Health-care providers.			
3	All staff members with direct student contact are informed about the special health needs of students with whom they have regular contact under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).			
4	Students with asthma have access to pre-exercise preventive medications.			
5	If prescribed, the school nurse can provide peak flow monitoring to measure air flow out of the lungs, as well as periodic instruction in and review of inhaler use.			
6	Teachers, coaches and other personnel monitor students with asthma, especially during physical activities.			
7	The school nurse or designee monitors information about absences of children with asthma and refers concerns to attendance personnel or counselors.			
C.	ENSURING STUDENTS WITH ASTHMA RECIEVE APPROPRIATE CARE	NOT YET	IN PROCESS	YES
1	The school's asthma management practices are consistent with recognized standards, such as the National Asthma Education and Prevention Program (NAEPP) guidelines.			
2	School personnel work to ensure that every student with asthma has an Asthma Action Plan that considers the context of the school and is written by a health-care provider and implement those plans provided to them.			
3	The school nurse provides Individualized Healthcare Plans (IHPs) for students diagnosed with asthma.			
4	School personnel strive to maintain up-to-date and accurate students' school health records.			
5	After every asthma attack on campus or at a school activity, school personnel review what actions were taken and determine whether proper procedures were followed.			
6	Students with symptoms are referred to their primary care providers, or families are helped to locate primary care providers.			
7	Health fairs, school open houses and parent-teacher conferences are used to inform families about State Child Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) and other providers and payment sources.			
8	The school collaborates with community agencies to help families pay for back-up medications such as inhalers, which are kept by the school nurse or other qualified staff member.			

<b>D</b>	<b>REDUCING ENVIRONMENTAL CONTRIBUTORS</b>	<b>NOT YET</b>	<b>IN PROCESS</b>	<b>YES</b>
1	The school uses the Environmental Protection Agency's "Tools for Schools" toolkit to improve indoor air quality (available at <a href="http://www.epa.gov/iaq/schools/">www.epa.gov/iaq/schools/</a> )			
2	The school works to prevent or remediate mold, mildew and leaks and reduces indoor humidity and dust as much as possible.			
3	The school works to ensure that bus exhaust fumes do not enter schools or outdoor areas used by students.			
4	The school prohibits furred and feathered animals from classrooms and monitors plants for mold.			
5	The school limits the amount of carpeting in schools and requires the use of special vacuuming procedures/equipment where carpeting remains.			
6	The school reviews building maintenance procedures periodically, updates them as necessary, and ensures that all maintenance staff is properly trained in these procedures.			
7	School personnel review all requirements in the materials safety data sheets concerning the handling of caustic and other dangerous substances and ensure that the requirements are met.			
8	School personnel regulate the use of potentially dangerous supplies and chemicals, including science and art supplies.			
9	The school promotes use of integrated pest management practices on school property.			
10	The school enforces a 100% tobacco-free environment for all students, staff, and visitors on all school properties, in all school vehicles, and at all school-sponsored events -- on and off campus.			
11	The school has or plan to participates in Ohio's US Green Ribbon schools program.			
<b>E.</b>	<b>EDUCATING SCHOOL STAFF</b>			
1	All staff with student contact are trained to identify asthma symptoms, asthma emergencies (including the signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis) and learn the appropriate steps to take in such emergencies.			
2	School nurses or other staff members are trained to implement asthma education programs for children and/or parents and in how to use community volunteers to help carry out these programs.			
3	The school requires training on asthma for all physical education and coaching staff.			
4	The school and/or district provides and supports smoking cessation programs for school staff.			
<b>F.</b>	<b>EDUCATING STUDENTS</b>			
1	Students with asthma are educated about asthma management, including the proper use of medications and the emergency response procedures.			
2	School personnel or community volunteers promote schoolwide asthma awareness through activities such as:			
2a	Sponsoring a health and wellness day with asthma education.			
2b	Integrating asthma education into the health education curriculum.			
2c	Distributing asthma educational materials that are culturally and linguistically appropriate to the school population.			
3	Student smoking cessation programs are provided and supported in the school district.			
<b>G.</b>	<b>EDUCATING FAMILIES AND CAREGIVERS</b>	<b>NOT YET</b>	<b>IN PROCESS</b>	<b>YES</b>
1	The school provides families with information about identifying asthma symptoms and triggers (including home environmental factors), as well as about asthma management and actions to take during an asthma emergency.			
2	The school reaches out to those who care for children with asthma before and after school, including parents, guardians, babysitters and siblings.			
3	The school collaborates with community organizations to provide asthma-related education for families and caregivers.			
<b>H.</b>	<b>COMMUNICATING WITH HEALTH-CARE PROVIDERS</b>	<b>NOT YET</b>	<b>IN PROCESS</b>	<b>YES</b>
1	The school develops and provides easy-to-use form letters to help communicate with health-care providers.			
2	The school relays important information about students' health directly to doctors and other health-care providers (with parental permission).			
3	The school fosters open lines of communication between school officials and hospitals, clinics and other care providers.			
4	The school encourages partnerships with health-care providers.			
<b>I.</b>	<b>COLLABORATING WITH THE COMMUNITY</b>	<b>NOT YET</b>	<b>IN PROCESS</b>	<b>YES</b>
1	The school encourages personnel to participate in community asthma coalitions that:			
1a	Conduct needs assessments to identify barriers, resources and opportunities to address asthma in the community.			
1b	Set a common agenda to address asthma in the community.			
1c	Collect data and conduct community research.			
1d	Involve the media in increasing the awareness of asthma management.			
1e	Support asthma-related legislative initiatives, including the funding of school nurse positions.			

The **School Asthma Initiative** was developed by the Ohio Department of Health Asthma Program in partnership with the Ohio Asthma Coalition and partners from Ohio's major professional school associations. The project used as a guideline the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) publication "Strategies for Addressing Asthma within a Coordinated School Health Program" which is available from the project's website at [www.odh.ohio.gov/odhprograms/eh/asthma/asthma1.aspx](http://www.odh.ohio.gov/odhprograms/eh/asthma/asthma1.aspx). This website also contains the tools and resources listed below, as developed or gathered for this initiative. Many tools are available online or available on loan from the Ohio Department of Health.

The School Asthma Initiative is specifically designed to be flexible to fit your needs. By using the assessment tool on the previous pages, you will be able to identify which components will be most helpful to you and what tools are available to implement these improvements. Knowing that different schools will have different levels of resources to contribute toward this effort, each component has both a full level implementation (best practices) and a lite implementation (to get you started).

There are a number of video based trainings available for staff on OhioTRAIN which is a free on-line educational site managed by the Ohio Department of Health that allows learners to view the program at a time and location that meets their own busy schedule. All components provide a certificate upon completion of the course and required assessments or evaluations. Some provide professional continuing education credits.

Components of School Asthma Initiative			
Component	Full Implementation	Lite Implementation	Tools
Management and Support Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess asthma needs</li> <li>Develop and implement written policies and procedures</li> <li>Asthma awareness training for school administrators</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assessment document</li> <li>Model Policies</li> <li>Inhaler Carry</li> <li>Assigning Asthma Wellness Roles</li> <li>Required staff training</li> <li>Environmental policies</li> <li>Video introduction for school administrators</li> </ul>
Health and Mental Health Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Required training on asthma management for school health personnel and for unlicensed assistive personnel</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use of downloadable forms and information at Initiative website</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On-line videos</li> <li>Medication administration records</li> <li>Asthma Action Plans</li> <li>Model Asthma Emergency Plans</li> <li>Model Individual Healthcare Plan</li> <li>Other resources</li> </ul>
Asthma Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elementary aged – ALA's <i>Open Airways for Schools</i></li> <li>Adolescents – ALA's <i>Kickin' Asthma</i> or AAFA's <i>Power Breathing</i></li> <li>Staff – ALA's <i>Asthma 123</i> or NEA's <i>Managing Asthma in the School Environment</i> (free online course)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elementary aged – <i>Okay With Asthma!</i> free online interactive program to be completed individually</li> <li>Adolescents – <i>Teen Asthma: It's NBD</i> (ODH produced online educational video)</li> <li><i>SafeSchools' Health Emergencies: Asthma</i> DVD training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Kickin' Asthma</i> and <i>Power Breathing</i> kits available for loan</li> <li>Assistance in identifying appropriate community facilitators for full implementation activities</li> <li>On-line video</li> <li>Additional resources and links</li> </ul>
Healthy School Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>USEPA's Tools for Schools program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Routine building inspections to identify and reduce asthma triggers</li> <li>Required training for school facilities personnel</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tools for Schools kits available for download – assistance with start-up</li> <li>Asthma-related school inspection checklist</li> <li>On-line video</li> </ul>
Physical Education and Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Required training for all coaching and related staff - "Staying in the Game with Asthma" on OhioTRAIN with accompanying written materials</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On-line video</li> <li>Printed booklet and clipboard sticker</li> </ul>
Family, School and Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integration of asthma educational activities into classroom instruction</li> <li>Asthma awareness activities for students</li> <li>Organization of asthma awareness activities at health fairs, PTA meetings, etc.</li> <li>On-line basic asthma educational video</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lesson plans</li> <li>Awareness posters</li> <li>Prepared presentation on asthma basics/speakers bureau</li> <li>On-line video</li> </ul>

**Resources may be available for loan. Call to find out more: 1-855-7-ASTHMA**