

Expanding Smokefree Communities

Community Profiles:

South Bronx, New York

Community Overview

The American Lung Association in New York in partnership with community housing groups and other key community partners have formed the **South Bronx Smokefree Housing Project** – a collaborative dedicated to reducing tobacco-related health disparities by eliminating harmful exposure to secondhand smoke for 187,000 South Bronx residents living in multi-unit housing.

Health Equity Focus

Facing considerable barriers to improving the health outcomes of its residents, the South Bronx has been rated one of the nation's unhealthiest and most poverty stricken areas. In its annual County Health Rankings, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation found that the Bronx ranked last, 62nd out of 62 counties in New York State in health outcomes.¹ This project aims to protect low-income multi-unit housing residents from exposure to harmful secondhand smoke by implementing comprehensive smokefree multi-unit housing voluntarily in all of the South Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation and Nos Que Damos' low-income serving properties in the South Bronx.

Community Demographics

The South Bronx is an area of the New York City Borough of the Bronx that includes the neighborhoods of University Heights, Tremont, Highbridge, Morrisania, Soundview, Hunts Point, and Castle Hill. The South Bronx community is home to almost half a million people 444,631 residents.² Most residents in the South Bronx are Hispanic (62.7%), but there is also a large African American population (33%).³ The South Bronx community is one of the poorest boroughs, with two of its neighborhoods having the lowest median income and the highest poverty rates in New York City.⁴ In both Mott Haven/Hunt's Point and Morrisania/Belmont the poverty rate is above 40% and the median income is less than \$21,000. The 16th Congressional District in the South Bronx had the highest poverty rate (40.2%), lowest median income, and highest proportion of children living below poverty (50.1%) in the United States. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the South Bronx is home to the highest unemployment rate in the city (12.6%); however, unfortunately, this community has experienced high unemployment rates for decades.⁵ In comparison with New York City, the Bronx has a lower high school graduation rate, 84.4% to 68.8%.⁶

Burden of Tobacco Use – The Challenge

Burden of Tobacco Use in the South Bronx

The South Bronx is significantly impacted by tobacco use and secondhand smoke exposure. Data from the 2010 New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Community Health Survey demonstrates that the South Bronx has one of the highest smoking rates in the city.⁷ With a tobacco use rate of 19%, compared to the overall New York City smoking rate of 14%, the South Bronx is suffering

from disproportionately high exposure to secondhand smoke, and high rates of disease and deaths attributable to tobacco use.⁸ Consequently, the South Bronx community experiences one of the highest pediatric asthma prevalence (17%) in the country, with asthma-related deaths being approximately three times higher than the national average in some parts of the Bronx.⁹

Burden of Secondhand Smoke Exposure: A Health Equity Issue

Not only is the South Bronx a low-income community with significant disparities in tobacco use, their residents also disproportionately exposed to unwanted secondhand smoke in their home. A 2010 New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Community Health Survey finds that many vulnerable low income South Bronx residents continue to be exposed to secondhand tobacco smoke in their homes. 7.8% of South Bronx residents reported that they are being exposed to secondhand smoke in their home all or most of the time. This reporting was highest among the top four high risk neighborhoods in New York City.

Advancing Health Equity through Smokefree Living – The Solution

In June the American Lung Association in New York received a sub-award from the American Lung Association National Headquarters under the *Expanding Smokefree Communities*, Community Transformation Grants program, to work with South Bronx Housing providers and other partners to eliminate secondhand smoke exposure in multi-unit housing.

Despite the seemingly somber statistics, South Bronx residents are steadfast in their commitment to protect and promote the well-being of its residents and have made great strides towards becoming a smokefree borough. Thanks in part to groundbreaking initiatives and committed leaders, the Bronx has been successful in reducing exposure to secondhand smoke on local college campuses, medical facilities, and city owned parks and beaches. Efforts like these are a clear indication that the community is making significant progress in changing the social norms regarding tobacco use.

The American Lung Association in New York is working in partnership with the volunteers of the South Bronx Smokefree Housing Project to reduce secondhand smoke exposure multi-unit housing properties. Bronx trends toward healthier living have made smokefree multi-unit housing communities a hot commodity, as recent surveys show the majority of renters would actually prefer to live in a smokefree building. The South Bronx Community Leadership Team includes high-level community leaders from multiple sectors who have combined their resources and talent to make smokefree housing a reality in the South Bronx. These members include representation from the following organizations:

- Bronx Health REACH/Institute for Family Health
- American Lung Association in New York
- Montefiore Medical Hospital
- Bronx Borough Presidents Office/Bronx CAN Health Initiative
- Bronx Smokefree Partnership
- NYC Coalition for a Smoke-Free City
- NYC Council Member Helen Foster
- NYS Senator Serrano

If you would like to find out more or get involved with the educational efforts underway in the South Bronx, please contact the American Lung Association by visiting www.lungne.org/bxsmokefreehousing.org.

¹ 2012 County Health Rankings. University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation www.countyhealthrankings.org

² The State of New York City's Housing and Neighborhoods: 2008 (NYU Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy), 2008 http://furmancenter.org/files/sotc/State_of_the_City_2008.pdf

³ New York City, Community District Profiles for CD 101, 102, 103, and 104. Found at <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/lucds/cdstart.shtml>

⁴ The State of New York City's Housing and Neighborhoods: 2008 (NYU Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy), 2008 http://furmancenter.org/files/sotc/State_of_the_City_2008.pdf

⁵ US Bureau of Labor Statistics, July 2010

⁶ U.S. Census Bureau: State and County QuickFacts: Bronx County 2010: <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/36/36005.html>

⁷ New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Epiquery: NYC Interactive Health Data System Community Health Survey 2010 <http://nyc.gov/health/epiquery>

⁸ Ibid

⁹ *Asthma and Air Pollution in the South Bronx*. Found at: http://www.icisnyu.org/south_bronx/AsthmaandAirPollution.html