

Know Your Audience and Benefits

Recruiting and building relationships with key individuals and organizations are critical to successful planning and implementation of an Asthma-Friendly School.

Consider who you need to work with to implement AFSI locally. Some individuals will become coalition members who will provide guidance and oversight of the program, and some will become partners in the actual implementation of the program.

Coalition Members or Partners could include:

- administrators/school boards
- school nurses
- teachers/coaches/physical education teachers
- bus drivers
- building/facilities personnel
- parents
- state, county, and local health and education departments
- community health professionals
- students with asthma
- classmates of students with asthma
- civic/business leaders
- additional community partners

Understanding how each audience will benefit from the asthma-friendly schools initiative will be a key to success. Just as few people would buy a product without believing they will benefit from it personally, individuals within the school and civic community will not “buy into” the asthma-friendly schools initiative without understanding how the program (and/or specific activities) will benefit them directly.

When working with each audience, focus your communication on key benefit or “selling points” for that particular audience. Incorporate these in specific written materials, as well as group presentations and small meetings. The following are lists of baseline benefits per audience. As you work with different groups and learn more about them and their perspectives, add specific benefits to these lists.

Administrators/School Boards

Superintendents, principals and school boards or boards of education members should support elements of asthma-friendly school activities—not only in setting policy, but also in supporting the concept, providing staff direction and budget support. School administrators benefit from Asthma-friendly school activities in the following ways:

- Evidence-based policies, programs and procedures.
- Fewer to no asthma crises in schools.

- Fewer student absenteeism and improve the student learning environment.
- Increased school income as absenteeism rates decline.
- Enhanced well-being of the school community and increases teacher productivity.
- Strategies for low-cost and no-cost indoor air quality management.
- Additional resources and partnership links within the community, including funders.
- Education for faculty and staff to improve the school's asthma management, responses to asthma emergencies and facilities management.
- Help minimize potential liability issues.
- Increased school's medical/health resources, which can help with management of other chronic illness.
- Improvements in faculty/staff productivity and performance.

School Nurses

School nurses are the core of the school health services, pivotal in responding to health issues and emergencies. School nurses benefit from Asthma-friendly school activities in the following ways:

- Decreased number of acute care visits to the school nurse or clinic.
- Improved indoor air quality, thereby decreasing the potential for asthma episodes and other building-related illnesses by students and staff.
- Asthma training for all school staff.
- Strengthened roles and expanded resources for school nurses.
- Expanded school health structures, such as creation of a school health council and introduction of a consulting physician or other health care professional into the school.
- Coordinated use of Asthma Action Plans by school staff.
- Reduced student absenteeism, enhanced well-being of members of the school community and improved student learning environment.
- Improved communications among school nurses and all other school staff about the needs of students with and without asthma, as well as those students with other chronic health conditions.

Teachers/Coaches/Physical Education Teachers

These individuals are the first line of response during a student's asthma episode. Their involvement is critical, as is their understanding of both the broad and specific issues of asthma management. Teachers and coaches benefit in the following ways:

- Asthma training for all faculty and staff, including effective and appropriate responses to asthma episodes and other respiratory emergencies.
- Improved IAQ, thereby decreasing the potential for student- and staff-related asthma episodes and improving the work environment, which potentially reduces teacher absenteeism, enhances well-being and increases teacher productivity.
- Increased coordinated use of Asthma Action Plans by school staff.
- Reduced student absenteeism and improved student learning environment.
- Clarified communication among school staff about the needs of students with asthma.
- Strategies to coordinate efforts between administration and school employees.



Bus Drivers/Transportation Company Staff

Without bus driver training to respond to a child experiencing respiratory distress, students who ride buses to and from school may be left with a void during the time—up to two hours per day—between their homes and school. Bus drivers/transportation company staff benefit from Asthma-friendly school activities in the following ways:

- Asthma training for bus drivers, including effective and appropriate responses to asthma emergencies.
- Strategies to improve communication between school and transportation staff.
- Improvements in the air quality on buses, thereby improving drivers' work environment and the well-being of drivers and student passengers.

Building/Facilities Staff

Because environment plays such a critical role in asthma management, building/facilities staff must understand their vital part in asthma-friendly school activities. Building/facilities staff benefit from Asthma-friendly school activities in the following ways:

- Save money through indoor air quality (IAQ) management, including integrated pest management (IPM).
- Implement strategies for involving faculty and staff in IAQ management.
- IAQ training for staff and focus on IAQ management, which can reduce physical plant and equipment deterioration.
- Recognition of facilities staff as valuable participants in the school's work to ensure students' health and well-being.
- Improved facilities staff working environment and enhanced facilities staff well-being.

Parents

Parent involvement is critical to supporting asthma education for students and parents and assisting parents in accessing additional community resources. Parents benefit from Asthma-friendly school activities in the following ways:

- Education about asthma for all students, and specific asthma management education for students with asthma.
- Reduced student absenteeism and improved student learning environment
- Few to no asthma crises in schools.
- Prepared school personnel to respond to asthma episodes and other respiratory emergencies by providing specific asthma training for all school staff.
- Improved IAQ, thereby decreasing the potential for asthma-related episodes by students.
- Strategies for better communication between nurses and other school staff, including a coordinated use of Asthma Action Plans.
- Strategies for improving communication among home, school, and health care providers.
- Improved indoor air quality, increasing teacher well-being and increasing productivity, thereby minimizing disruptions to student learning.
- Implementation of programs, documents, and research conducted by medical and public health experts and members of professional organizations.



State Education & Health Departments

Asthma issues should and must be on these departments' agendas, whether or not they are currently focused on asthma. These organizations' employees can't provide resources and information and benefit from direct involvement in asthma-friendly school efforts. Asthma-friendly school activities benefit state education and health departments because these activities:

- are based on programs, documents and research conducted by education, medical and public health organizations, including American Lung Association, CDC, American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), National Association of School Nurses (NASN), National Education Association (NEA), National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (NHLB) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
- may greatly reduce or eliminate asthma crises in schools.
- may reduce student and teacher absenteeism and improve student's learning and teacher's working environments.
- incorporate community-wide collaboration among the school community, healthcare providers, community-based organizations, civic/business leaders, and insurance providers.
- help minimize potential liability issues.
- increase the school's medical/health resources which can help with management of other chronic illnesses.
- maximize resources.

Healthcare Providers and Clinicians

Local health departments, hospitals/clinics, and individual primary health care providers can and should play important advisory and hands-on roles in asthma-friendly schools activities. Asthma-friendly schools activities benefit community health professionals because these activities:

- improve compliance with prescribed asthma management
- improve the quality of adults' observation and the validity of history that doctors receive regarding a child's symptoms.
- address two significant health issues—asthma and air quality.
- focus on a holistic, community-wide approach.
- include opportunities for professional development, such as consulting services, volunteer medical services, and advisory activities (school health council, etc.).
- may result in decreased asthma episodes and emergencies by students and school faculty and staff.
- provide positive community relations/public relations opportunities for organizations and individuals.
- are based on programs, documents, and research conducted by education, medical and public health organizations, including American Lung Association, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), National Association of School Nurses (NASN), National Education Association (NEA), and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Students with Asthma

Benefits to children with asthma will reflect the benefits and results of specific asthma and healthy indoor environmental education, such as Open Airways For Schools and IAQ Tools for Schools, from which students may receive the following:

- specific asthma self-management skills.



- fewer symptoms.
- improved self-esteem.
- opportunity to participate more fully in activities they enjoy.
- opportunity to relate feelings about asthma and interact with others with asthma.
- positive reinforcement .
- focused attention from teacher or asthma education instructor.
- improved school performance.

Additional benefits of improved/expanded school health services as a result of asthma-friendly schools activities include:

- more asthma management support by teachers and other school staff.
- better access to asthma medications.
- greater referral to and use of medical and other community resources.
- better IAQ management.

Classmates of Students with Asthma

Classmates of students with asthma may include individuals who have not yet been diagnosed with asthma. Those individuals will benefit from asthma-friendly schools activities by:

- increased faculty and staff awareness of signs and symptoms of asthma and appropriate responses to the student.
- improved IAQ at the school.
- their awareness of other students' asthma in general and the warning signs of an asthma episode.
- having increased empathy for those with asthma.
- learning to assist peers with asthma management.
- possibly earning service-learning credit for their involvement in school-based or community-focused asthma awareness activities.

Civic/Business Leaders

These include individuals and organizations who may become involved in an asthma coalition, fund specific activities, or become involved in awareness campaigns and programs. Asthma-friendly schools activities benefit civic and business leaders because these activities:

- address two significant health issues that affect the entire community—asthma and air quality.
- focus on a holistic, community-wide approach, which provides networking opportunities.
- provide positive community/public relations opportunities for organizations and individuals.
- involve a range of prominent local professionals and organizations.
- can save public funds and maximize resources.
- positively affect students' and school staff's health and well-being.

Additional Community Partners

These include community-based organizations that may or may not be related to general health issues or asthma, specifically, or individual professionals who contribute needed skills and/or resources to your initiative. Examples may include: community foundations, community development associations, youth organizations, minority business organizations, community housing advocates, environmental justice



advocates, attorneys, epidemiologists, university professors, and public relations professionals.

While these organizations and individuals may not at first be priority partners, keep in mind that they offer a variety of resources, including education and leadership training and social and support services. These additional partners will be valuable in both planning and implementing your initiative and their experiences may tap into existing resources. They are another link to parents and are often trusted by community members. They provide the home and community component of a community-based strategy, as well as professional skills/services that will strengthen implementation and program outreach. Asthma-friendly schools activities benefit these organizations and individuals because these activities:

- provide individual referrals between programs.
- promote community programs/resources.
- ensure a continuum of community services to a target population (including and beyond asthma services).
- support resource networking and may minimize duplication of effort.
- create joint/increased funding opportunities.
- provide opportunities for individual contributions to a community health issue.

