

# BREATHING EASIER *in* NEW JERSEY



SUCCESS STORIES FROM  
THE NEW JERSEY ASTHMA  
AWARENESS AND EDUCATION  
PROGRAM



“Public health is about populations and this is one disease that definitely disproportionately affects certain populations. It will take a public health approach to tackle the problem of asthma, and I don't think working on an individual basis will be enough to really solve this issue.”

## MELISSA SANTORELLI

epidemiologist

NEW JERSEY ASTHMA AWARENESS  
AND EDUCATION PROGRAM

All information and data provided by the  
New Jersey Department of Health Asthma  
Awareness and Education Program

## THE PROBLEMS:

- As of 2009, about 840,000 New Jersey adults had asthma in their lifetimes and about 511,000 adults currently had asthma. That same year, about 295,000 New Jersey children had been diagnosed with asthma in their lives and about 188,000 were living with the chronic respiratory disease.
- In 2009, asthma-related emergency room visits topped 52,700, with rates among children ages 5 to 9 years old rising by almost 20 percent in the previous five years. However, asthma-related hospitalizations among black children younger than 5 have been decreasing.



## THE PUBLIC HEALTH RESPONSE TO ASTHMA:

The New Jersey Asthma Awareness and Education Program and its partners focus on communities with the greatest needs. They increase asthma awareness, educate people on how to avoid environmental asthma triggers, partner with local stakeholders, and help residents manage their own health. And their efforts are paying off.

- Since 2001, the New Jersey asthma program has offered an Asthma Treatment Plan for both adults and young students. Residents living with asthma can download the free plan to learn the best ways to manage the disease and what to do in an asthma emergency. Students or their parents are encouraged to file a copy of the plan with their school nurses. Asthma program staff continually gather feedback on the plans and use the data to make them as user-friendly as possible. The plans have been downloaded more than 24,000 times.
- New Jersey's Asthma Friendly School Award program has reached more than 388,900 students and nearly 29,500 school faculty. To qualify for an award, a school has to fulfill six components, including signing a no-idling pledge for school buses, training school nurses, and having a nebulizer on site. The six components also help schools comply with New Jersey's laws for asthma management and indoor air quality. About 600 schools have received the award since 2006. In 2012, the New Jersey asthma program launched a similar program for child care centers, reaching more than 800 children and more than 200 child care staff.
- In 2013, the New Jersey asthma program partnered with the state's Healthy Homes effort to help children living with uncontrolled asthma in south New Jersey. During the pilot project, emergency room staff identify patients in need and connect them with a nurse, who will provide asthma case management and education. The project is targeting neighborhoods with disproportionately high rates of asthma-related problems.
- In New Jersey, asthma results in millions of dollars in health care costs, much of which is preventable through an evidence-based, public health approach to asthma control.

## CDC's National Asthma Control Program

New Jersey is one of 36 states that receives funding and technical support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Asthma Control Program. Since 1999, CDC has been leading public health efforts to prevent costly asthma complications, create asthma-friendly environments, and empower people living with asthma with the tools they need to better manage their own health. **Find out more at** [www.cdc.gov/asthma](http://www.cdc.gov/asthma).

