

BREATHING EASIER *in*

WEST VIRGINIA



SUCCESS STORIES FROM THE
WEST VIRGINIA ASTHMA EDUCATION
AND PREVENTION PROGRAM



“From a public health perspective, we want to serve as leaders in coordinating and collaborating with other organizations to do what’s best for people with asthma in our state. We work with people in small communities to get everyone involved on a local level as well as on a state level. It’s one of the best things we can do as a state health department.”

CYNTHIA KEELY WILSON

program manager

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All information and data provided
by the West Virginia Department of
Health and Human Resources Asthma
Education and Prevention Program

THE PROBLEMS:

- As of 2010, more than seven percent of West Virginia adults, or about 103,500 individuals, and 6.5 percent of the state’s children, or 24,600, were living with asthma. Also, about 11 percent of West Virginia adults and 11 percent of the state’s children had been diagnosed with the chronic respiratory disease at some point in their lives.
- In 2010, nearly 13 percent of adults with asthma visited an emergency room due to the disease, and more than 2,700 asthma-related hospitalizations occurred. Charges for 2010 asthma hospitalizations topped \$29 million.



THE PUBLIC HEALTH RESPONSE TO ASTHMA:

The West Virginia Asthma Education and Prevention Program and its partners focus on groups 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.

- In cooperation with the state’s Office of Healthy Schools, the West Virginia Asthma Education and Prevention Program helped facilitate the purchase of peak flow meters and spacers for children with asthma in West Virginia public schools. Both devices help students better manage and control their asthma, aid in improving health and symptom recognition, and contribute to reducing asthma-related absenteeism. Beginning in mid-2013, asthma program staff began training school nurses, support staff, and families on how to use the devices and recognize asthma symptoms, and on how to distribute the devices based on student needs.
- The West Virginia asthma program works to increase the ranks of certified asthma educators, especially in rural and hard-to-reach areas. Since 2009, the asthma program has offered three asthma educator prep courses. Thanks to ongoing efforts, the number of certified asthma educators in West Virginia has more than doubled from six in 2008 to 15 in 2013. Certified asthma educators have a long record of positive outcomes, such as reducing emergency room visits and daily asthma symptoms.
- Since 2003, the West Virginia asthma program has worked with primary care centers to reach rural residents. In partnership with the West Virginia University Office of Health Services Research, the asthma program oversees efforts to assist primary care center staff to establish and maintain electronic chronic disease patient registries. The enhanced system helps providers abide by national asthma care guidelines. Recently, work began to integrate asthma indicators and quality care improvement metrics with electronic medical records. As of 2013, 31 primary care centers were participating.
- In West Virginia, asthma results in millions of dollars in health care costs — costs that are largely preventable through an evidence-based, public health approach to asthma control.

CDC’s National Asthma Control Program

West Virginia 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.

