

# Fact Sheet:

## Assessment of Health Complaints Among Children Living in FEMA Temporary Housing Units in Hancock County, Mississippi

### Background

The Mississippi State Department of Health asked the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to do a study after Hancock County doctors reported an increase in breathing problems among children living in FEMA-issued trailers and mobile homes following Hurricane Katrina.

### What CDC found

CDC found that the patterns of health care visits for respiratory illness after Hurricane Katrina were similar for children who lived in FEMA-issued trailers and mobile homes and those who did not.

The proportion of health care visits for upper respiratory illnesses decreased and the proportion of health care visits for lower respiratory illnesses increased in the second year after Hurricane Katrina compared with the year before the hurricane for both groups of children. CDC did not have enough information to determine the reason for this change.

Because of evacuations and the closure of health care facilities, children's visits for all illnesses potentially related to indoor air quality went down the first year after the hurricane. By the second year, however, they had returned to pre-hurricane levels.

### What this study can and cannot tell us

*These findings only apply to the children of Hancock County, Mississippi who visited the health care facilities studied. They also do not tell CDC anything about children outside Hancock County.* Hurricane Katrina destroyed thousands of electronic and print medical records. This limited CDC's research efforts and made it impossible to estimate how often children visited health care facilities for all of Hancock County. CDC also could not account for factors influencing families' decisions to return, or not to return, to the county within 2 years after the hurricane.

### Where the study was done

CDC based its findings on an investigation of children aged 2 through 12 years of age who lived in Hancock County, Mississippi both before and after Hurricane Katrina and who visited a health care facility in the county for illnesses possibly related to indoor air quality.

### How the study was done

CDC studied the medical records of 144 children and interviewed their parents or guardians by telephone. During the time the study was done, two-thirds (96) of these children lived or had lived in FEMA-issued trailers or mobile homes.

### To learn more

The full report of this study is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehhe/trailerstudy/>.

