

About the East Harlem Asthma Center of Excellence

The New York City Health Department's East Harlem Asthma Center of Excellence (EHACE) provides an array of services to children with persistent asthma. By raising awareness among families, introducing new care systems to medical providers, and working to improve housing conditions, EHACE is reducing the need to hospitalize children for this condition. Here is a brief summary of the EHACE program and its accomplishments to date:

The Model

The EHACE model of asthma prevention and treatment has six components:

- The Walk-in Center offers a community setting where families can learn to manage asthma symptoms, asthma medications and the conditions that trigger attacks. In addition to an expert and welcoming staff, the Walk-in Center has a well-stocked library and ample meeting space. It organizes support groups for parents and teens and offers services to help families rid households of asthma-triggering pests and mold.
- The Asthma Counselor Program provides one-on-one asthma education and case-management services to the most severely affected children.
- The Environmental Control Program works in homes and the community to reduce conditions that trigger asthma attacks.
- The Health Care System Improvement Program helps East Harlem medical providers manage asthma more effectively by providing tools to monitor their patients' health and progress.
- The Harlem Asthma Network enables health care providers to collaborate and share knowledge about asthma.
- The Research and Evaluation Team monitors the center's efforts to enhance their effectiveness.

The Impact

The Center of Excellence has provided services to families in East Harlem since early 2008. Here are some measures of the impact it has had:

- Walk-in Center health educators and outreach specialists have trained 1,200 children and caregivers to manage asthma. They also have trained 150 staff members at schools, day care centers and community organizations.
- The EHACE Asthma Counselor Program has provided case management services to 542 children whose asthma is poorly controlled. Through this program, asthma counselors work with the children most at risk for hospitalization. The counselors teach self-management skills, review medications, and help families address conditions in the home that can trigger asthma attacks. Families participating in the program reported a 49% reduction in emergency department visits and a 33% reduction in hospitalizations after one year. The asthma counselors are located at Metropolitan Hospital, Mt. Sinai Hospital and the EHACE Walk-in Center.
- Environmental specialists have removed pests and mold from 465 homes to reduce exposure to asthma-related allergens and irritants. EHACE also works with the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) to repair structural problems that can exacerbate asthma in public housing units. This collaboration has resulted in repairs to 26 units; in 29 other units, work is now underway.
- The Health Care System Improvement Program has significantly improved asthma care in East Harlem. At Metropolitan Hospital, for example, prescriptions for inhaled corticosteroid medications in the pediatric emergency department have increased by 57% since 2009, as the staff has implemented new systems of care.
- The EHACE Harlem Asthma Network has united 20 local organizations in a common effort to improve care for children with asthma. The network includes experts in environmental clean-up, insurance coverage, case management and clinical practice.