



## **HUD AWARDS FIRST-EVER GRANT TO COMBAT ASTHMA IN CHILDREN LIVING IN EAST HARLEM**

*Community Non-profit Little Sisters of the Assumption Family Health Service to Partner  
with The New York Academy of Medicine*

**NEW YORK** – HUD Regional Administrator Adolfo Carrión today announced that The New York Academy of Medicine was awarded a three-year, \$549,000 grant, in partnership with Little Sisters of the Assumption (LSA) Family Health Service, to improve indoor environmental conditions and promote education and medical services for asthmatic children and other residents of East Harlem living in public and assisted multifamily housing. This was the first time HUD ever awarded a grant to combat indoor conditions that exacerbate asthma.

“Homes with health hazards such as mold, dust and poor ventilation can injure children and worsen conditions such as asthma, and HUD wants to ensure that children have a healthy place to call home,” Carrión said. “This grant will not only help to clean up this type of health hazard, but will support the development of innovative new approaches to improve and control asthma in children.”

The announcement was made at Jefferson Houses in East Harlem where Mr. Carrión was joined by Congressman Charles Rangel; Councilwoman Melissa Mark-Viverito; John Rhea, Chairman, New York City Housing Authority; Jon Gant, Director, HUD’s Office of Healthy Homes and Lead Hazard Control; Jo Ivey Boufford, President, The New York Academy of Medicine; and Ray Lopez, Director of Environmental Health, LSA Family Health Service.

The New York Academy of Medicine was awarded funding under HUD’s Asthma Interventions in Public and Assisted Multifamily Program. The project aims to improve the health and quality of life of East Harlem children (age 17 and under) with severe and/or persistent asthma through innovative approaches to mitigating asthma triggers through home visits as well as workshops, comprehensive case management, education, training, and a remediation program focused on improving indoor air quality and eliminating household environmental conditions that exacerbate asthma symptoms.

This is a very exciting project for us, in part because Little Sisters of the Assumption Family Health Service’s preliminary data suggest that HUD’s *Controlling Asthma through Home Remediation* program is highly effective,” said Jo Ivey Boufford, MD, NYAM President. “We’re hoping that NYAM’s more rigorous evaluation will provide evidence that facilitates the sustainability, expansion and replication of this innovative, community-based model.”

Approximately 18.5% of East Harlem children ages 4-5 have asthma, double the New York City and national prevalence rate; 23% of children ages 5-12 in the area suffer from asthma; students of Puerto Rican descent approach 35%. Asthma is now recognized as a leading cause of school and work absences, emergency room visits and hospitalizations among low-income minority populations in communities like East Harlem.

Little Sisters of the Assumption Family Health Services, Inc., a community-based, non-profit organization devoted to improving the lives of East Harlem residents, is partnering with NYAM on this project and has been tackling the problems and consequences of asthma for years. The HUD grant supports CAHR,

which takes an innovative approach to targeting the causes and triggers of asthma in public housing through home visits by trained LSA community health workers. The program will help reduce or eliminate household environmental conditions that exacerbate asthma symptoms such as mold, poor ventilation, pest infestation (roaches, bedbugs, and rodents), house dust and second-hand smoke.

“LSA’s Environmental Health Program has a proven record of success in combating asthma triggers,” said LSA’s Executive Director, Gary S. Carter, LCSW. “In 2008, we reduced the number of missed school days, emergency room visits, and missed work days for families by 40% as a result of our remediation work. This grant will allow us to significantly expand the number of children we can help who live in public housing.”

“This HUD funding is wonderful news for both Little Sisters of the Assumption and for the children of East Harlem. Little Sisters have been working with families with asthma in this community for a long time, and has been a great partner with our Harlem District Public Health Office. Improving the home environment is an essential part of controlling asthma, and this funding will allow expansion and evaluation of this important work.”

Families will be provided with information on household asthma triggers and trained how to safely remediate health hazards, if appropriate. Recognizing that low-income families may lack the resources to buy the supplies and equipment needed to sustain environmental improvements, CAHR will offer loans of equipment, such as HEPA-filtered vacuums and air cleaners.

*CAHR will be a collaborative project: LSA will implement the project (conduct home assessments, perform remediation and hands-on training, and offer workshops and other program activities), while NYAM will evaluate and measure outcomes and cost.*

#### **About NYAM**

*The New York Academy of Medicine (NYAM) has been advancing the health of people in cities since 1847. Drawing on the expertise of diverse partners worldwide and more than 2,000 elected Fellows from across the professions, our current priorities are to create environments in cities that support healthy aging, to strengthen systems that prevent disease and promote the public’s health, and to implement interventions that eliminate health disparities. For more information, please visit [www.nyam.org](http://www.nyam.org).*

#### **About LSA Family Health Service**

*The Little Sisters of the Assumption Family Health Service, Inc. ([www.littlesistersfamily.org](http://www.littlesistersfamily.org)), a community-based, nonprofit organization, has been improving the lives of vulnerable families in East Harlem for over 50 years through healthcare and social services, education programs, advocacy, and crisis counseling. No family or individual is ever turned away because they cannot pay. Our innovative home- and center-based programs empower struggling families to access life’s basic necessities and strengthen the entire community. For LSA’s environmental health videos, visit [http://bit.ly/LSA\\_Mold](http://bit.ly/LSA_Mold) or [http://bit.ly/LSA\\_Bedbugs](http://bit.ly/LSA_Bedbugs).*

#### **Quotes from Dignitaries**

##### **From Congressman Charles Rangel**

"I commend HUD Regional Director Adolfo Carrión, NYCHA Chairman John Rhea and their teams for partnering with local community leaders and organizations such as the Little Sisters of the Assumption and the New York Academy of Medicine to combat asthma in East Harlem," said Congressman Charles B. Rangel. "Many of the 7 million children in America who suffer from asthma are disproportionately found in low-income neighborhoods. Asthma is the single most common chronic disease among children, yet

can be prevented with adequate care. Thanks to this HUD grant, local advocates and leaders on the frontlines of this important issue will have more resources to ensure that our youth can lead more active and healthier lives."

**From John Rhea, Chairman, New York City Housing Authority**

"Together with HUD, the New York Academy of Medicine and we affirm that we are committed to combat the conditions that cause asthma and make it worse—both indoors and out. Supporting our children and saving them from this debilitating disease will require all of our efforts. Our youth are not only our most precious resource, but they are indeed our future and the future health and prosperity of New York City rests on how well we support them today."

**From Jon Gant, Director, HUD's Office of Healthy Homes and Lead Hazard Control**

"No one, especially a child, should be worried that their home is making them sick," said Jon Gant, Director of HUD's Office of Healthy Homes. "Home is the one place where a child should feel safe and grow up healthy. Sadly, too many children struggle to breathe in their homes because of the harmful conditions there. Our asthma control funding will put an end to this unnecessary struggle for many children, and we're very proud to partner with the New York Academy of Medicine to achieve this goal."

**From Ray Lopez, Director of LSA's Environmental Health program**

"We are excited about expanding our work helping children living in public and federally-assisted housing," said Ray Lopez, Director of LSA's Environmental Health Program. "This grant will enable us to demonstrate the success of our community health worker model, allow us to continue to develop leadership among NYCHA tenants, and share our best practices with other organizations in New York and other states."