

Proposal to Address New Haven's Asthma Crisis

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Overview

New Haven is ranked 5th worst in the US according to the 2021 “Asthma Capitals” report issued by the Asthma & Allergy Foundation of America.¹ Thousands of New Haven children and families are impacted by asthma. The burden of asthma expands beyond health outcomes alone; asthma affects school attendance and achievement, job retention and economic advancement, and more. Without a targeted, concerted, and sustained effort, the New Haven community will be held back by the unaddressed, longstanding asthma crisis.

This proposal is the result of the dedicated efforts of parents and grandparents of children experiencing asthma in New Haven Public Schools who belong to Congregations Organized for a New Connecticut ([CONNECT](#)), an organization of 37 congregations and institutions in New Haven and Fairfield Counties representing over 30,000 people. These parents and grandparents recognized a problem: the severe asthma of their children and grandchildren, and many of their peers, created a significant obstacle to experiencing success and joy in school. Given the fact that asthma burdens so many New Haven Public School students, these parents and grandparents resolved to seek tangible solutions to improve the school experience of *all* children with asthma in NHPS. This is that solution.

Scope of the Problem

Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that Connecticut has among the highest childhood asthma rates in the nation.² In 2018, nearly one out of every 10 children in Connecticut had asthma. New Haven has the highest asthma hospitalization rates in the state.³ In 2009 alone, the cost of child hospitalization and emergency asthma visits in New Haven totaled

¹ Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, (2021). 2021 Asthma Capitals. Retrieved from [asthmacapitals.com](https://www.aafa.org/media/3040/aafa-2021-asthma-capitals-report.pdf). <https://www.aafa.org/media/3040/aafa-2021-asthma-capitals-report.pdf>

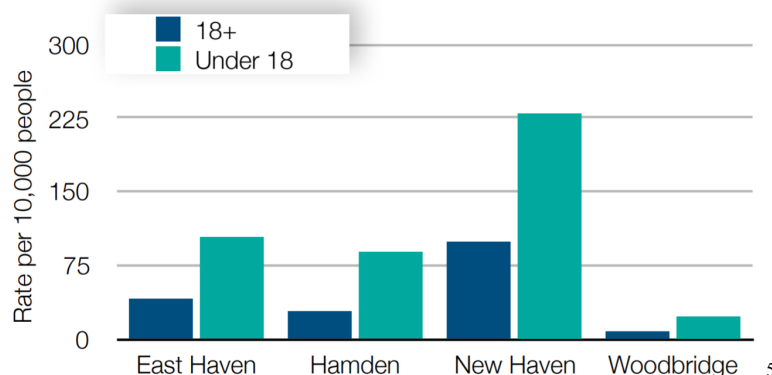
² “Child Asthma Prevalence by Race and State/Territory.” *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, 11 June 2018, www.cdc.gov/asthma/asthmadata/Child_Prevalence_Race.html.

³ Wang, Sherrie. “Home, Sick Home: How New Haven’s Housing Neglect Produced a Crisis of Childhood Asthma.” *Yale Daily News*, 14 Mar. 2021, <https://yaledailynews.com/blog/2021/03/14/feature-home-sick-home/>.

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\$4,480,418.⁴ Over 14% of New Haven Public School students — that’s more than 3,000 students — have asthma. In the [2018 NHPS School Health Centers Annual Report](#), asthma was identified as the leading health cause for absenteeism in the district. Children with asthma are three times more likely to be chronically absent than their peers without asthma.

Figure 10. Age-adjusted asthma ED visit rate by age group, 2010-2014 average



Asthma is [a critical health justice issue in New Haven](#), disproportionately impacting New Haven’s predominantly Black and Latinx neighborhoods and schools. As New Haven Public Schools strive to recover learning loss and re-engage students post-pandemic, addressing student absenteeism will be critical. By taking proactive measures to support NHPS families burdened by asthma, the city and district have an opportunity to improve attendance for students struggling with asthma and lower asthma hospitalization rates.

A 2010 [CDC evaluation](#) discovered that home visits for asthma can reduce hospitalizations by 87 percent and school absences by 82 percent. For every 100 participants, there was a net savings of over \$26,000 from prevented emergency visits. In Connecticut and New Haven, children of color have [higher emergency department visit rates for asthma](#) than white children. We must seize the opportunity that the American Rescue Plan funding presents to proactively address the longstanding crisis of asthma in our city.

An Opportunity to Implement a Meaningful, Community-Led Solution

Community Health Workers (CHWs) have demonstrated success in reducing health inequalities and improving health outcomes for communities of color in Connecticut and beyond.

⁴ Peng, J. and Nepaul A.N. (2013). Asthma Data Brief - Comparison of Hospital Healthcare Utilization across Selected Geographic Designations. Hartford, CT: Connecticut Dept of Public Health. <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Departments-and-Agencies/DPH/dph/hems/asthma/pdf/AsthmaDataBrief2013pdf.pdf>, 15.

⁵ Ankrah, Josephine. 2019, Asthma in Greater New Haven: Local Context and the Role of Walkability, Bikeability, Parks, and Safety, A Report on Asthma and the Environment for the New Haven Green Fund, http://www.gnhgreenfund.org/uploads/4/5/7/0/45701091/final_report_062819_data_haven.pdf.

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School-based CHWs have been implemented successfully in districts such as Flint, Michigan and Portland, Oregon to reduce health-based obstacles to learning, including asthma.

School-Based Community Health Workers should be stationed in the five New Haven Public Schools sites with the highest concentration of students with asthma, and should provide support as needed to all students across the district with severe and uncontrolled asthma.

Proposed Asthma Allocation from American Rescue Plan funds: \$2 million

We propose the allocation of \$2 million dollars from the American Rescue Plan funds to proactively address asthma. These funds would be used to hire five school-based Community Health Workers and one Manager, as well as to subsidize the Triggers Be Gone funding.

Personnel costs, fringe benefits, professional development, and necessary equipment will total \$1,537,500. The remaining \$462,500 will be allocated for the Triggers Be Gone program to fund the collection of supplies to distribute to families for asthma remediation, including but not limited to vacuum cleaners, air filters, and air conditioners.

Personnel: Personnel costs include one CHW Manager and five CHWs. The total cost of personnel salaries for a four-year period is \$1,212,000.

Annual Manager Salary: \$63,000. The CHW Manager will be contracted for \$35.00 per hour at 37.5 hours per week for 12 months.

Annual Community Health Worker Salary: \$48,000. Each of the five CHWs will be contracted for \$25.00 per hour at 40 hours per week for 12 months.

Fringe Benefits: Fringe benefits have been calculated for 25% of the employee's annual salary. The total cost of fringe benefits for a four-year period is \$303,000.

Annual Manager Fringe Benefits: \$15,750.

Annual Community Health Worker Fringe Benefits: \$12,000.

Professional Development: Professional Development funding will be allocated to support Community Health Workers in pursuit of the Core Competencies Training (\$2,400 per person) and the Community Health Worker certification (\$100 per person), totaling \$12,500.

Equipment: The manager and CHWs will each require a laptop, cell phone, and school badge, totaling \$10,000.

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PROPOSED BUDGET:

Expense	Cost	Per Year	4 year Total
Community Health Worker: Salary + Fringe Benefits	\$48,000 + \$12,000	\$60,000	\$240,000
Totals for 5 CHWs	\$240,000 + \$60,000	\$300,000	\$1,200,000
Community Health Worker Manager: Salary + Fringe Benefits	\$63,000 + \$15,750	\$78,750	\$315,000
CHW Professional Development	\$12,500		
CHW and CHW Manager Equipment	\$10,000		
Total CHW Expenses	\$1,537,500		
Triggers Be Gone Subsidy	\$462,500		
TOTAL	\$2,000,000		

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ADDENDUM: Proposed CHW Manager & Community Health Worker Job Descriptions:

PROPOSED JOB DESCRIPTION: Community Health Worker - Manager

Job Title:	Community Health Worker - Manager
Department:	New Haven Health Department
Reports To:	Director of Public Health and/or Department Authority/Designee
Type of Position:	Full-time
Prepared Date:	August 20, 2021

GENERAL STATEMENT OF DUTIES:

This is a 4-year grant-funded position. The Community Health Worker Manager is responsible for managing and supporting school-based Community Health Workers in New Haven Public Schools. The CHW Manager will oversee data collection and referrals, as well as manage relationships between CHWs, school sites, school-based health centers, and the New Haven Health Department.

SUPERVISION RECEIVED: Ranges from bi-weekly to minimal; supervision provided on an as-needed basis.

ESSENTIAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

The essential functions or duties described below are the primary functions and duties of the position. There may be other types of work that may be performed, and the omission of a particular duty or function does not exclude that duty or function from the position provided the duty or function is similar in work, related to the work, or logically assigned to the position.

1. Accepts and delegates referrals from school and healthcare professionals to build the caseloads of school-based Community Health Workers;
2. Coaches, counsels, and evaluates school-based Community Health Workers to ensure that each Community Health Worker is effectively serving at least 20 clients per month;
3. Oversees and manages the collection of data regarding student absences as well as asthma hospitalizations for students supported by the school-based Community Health Workers;
4. Manages the team of school-based Community Health Workers to facilitate collaboration between the CHW team and community stakeholders;
5. Conducts program evaluations and prepares programmatic reports;
6. Provides training to Community Health Workers regarding asthma triggers and prevention strategies;
7. Supports school-based Community Health Workers to train parents, teachers, and students about asthma triggers and prevention strategies;

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8. Aids Community Health Workers in identifying asthma exacerbations in the home, school, and outdoor environments, and pursuing remediation solutions;
9. Serves as a liaison between school administrators, the Health Department, the Head of School Nursing, and the CHW team;
10. Facilitates communication between school-based Community Health Workers and relevant agencies and personnel, including but not limited to: Putting on AIRs, Triggers Be Gone, Healthy Homes, and Medical-Legal Partnership;
11. Travels between various locations within the community to perform relevant duties.

ADDITIONAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Other administrative and management tasks may be assigned as appropriate.

- Attend team meetings and report directly to the supervisor.
- Additional duties may be required that are particular to the department.

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS:

Bachelor's Degree or minimum of five years' experience in public health. Community Health Worker experience and certification strongly preferred.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ABILITIES

- Must be proficient in a variety of computer software applications: Microsoft Word, Excel and other Office applications as necessary.
- Ability to organize, prioritize and plan/schedule work tasks to meet deadlines.
- Comfortable with working directly in the community and in non-traditional settings.
- Must be able to interact professionally and communicate effectively with individuals at all levels of government as well as the public.
- Ability to exercise good judgment in the delivery of professional services.
- Must possess the ability to handle sensitive and confidential situations.
- Bilingual strongly preferred.
- Resident of New Haven preferred.

LICENSES AND CERTIFICATIONS

A valid Connecticut Driver's License may be required for transportation between various sites. Community Health Worker certification preferred.

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PROPOSED JOB DESCRIPTION: School-Based Community Health Worker

Job Title:	School-Based Community Health Worker
Department:	New Haven Health Department
Reports To:	Community Health Worker - Manager
Type of Position:	Full-time
Prepared Date:	August 20, 2021

GENERAL STATEMENT OF DUTIES:

This is a 4-year grant-funded position. As trusted messengers of the communities they serve, Community Health Workers (CHWs) serve as essential components of ensuring health equity. The primary focus of the School-Based Community Health Worker will be supporting students with uncontrolled asthma within New Haven Public Schools, assisting School Health Centers and school nurses to address students' asthma exacerbations at school and in the home, and connect families with community resources to remediate asthma triggers such as Triggers Be Gone, Putting on AIRs, and Healthy Homes. The Community Health Worker will ensure that students' appropriate Asthma Action Plans and medical documentation are followed by the nurse and relevant school personnel.

SUPERVISION RECEIVED: Ranges from daily to weekly; supervision provided on an as-needed basis.

ESSENTIAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

The essential functions or duties described below are the primary functions and duties of the position. There may be other types of work that may be performed, and the omission of a particular duty or function does not exclude that duty or function from the position provided the duty or function is similar in work, related to the work, or logically assigned to the position.

1. Develops and serves a caseload of a minimum of 20 students each month burdened by asthma;
2. Supports students and families to implement Asthma Action Plan and address asthma exacerbations at home and in school in order to control asthma and reduce school absences and hospitalizations;
3. Provides training to parents, teachers, and students about asthma triggers and prevention strategies;
4. Bridges communication between students, teachers, school nurses, pediatricians, community agencies, and families;

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5. Connects families to community agencies and resources to address asthma, including but not limited to: Putting on AIRs, Triggers Be Gone, Healthy Homes, and Medical-Legal Partnership;
6. Collects data regarding absences and asthma hospitalizations for every student on their caseload;
7. Identifies asthma exacerbations in the home, school, and outdoor environments, and pursues proactive solutions in communication with the family;
8. Participates in weekly CHW team meetings as well as weekly check-ins with the CHW Manager;
9. Identifies and addresses any additional obstacles, as relevant, to students attending school and accessing quality healthcare and mental healthcare;
10. Provides ongoing follow-up, basic motivational interviewing, and goal setting with students;
11. Helps students and families access medical and non-medical resources, including medical care, substance abuse treatment programs, housing programs, food services, etc.
12. Travels between various locations, such as homes and school sites, within the community to perform duties.

ADDITIONAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Other administrative and management tasks may be assigned as appropriate.

- Attend team meetings and report directly to the CHW manager.
- Additional duties may be required that are particular to the department.

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS:

At least two years experience in health outreach initiatives, public health, and patient education. CHW Certification preferred or willing to become certified within a span of 3 months. Community Health Worker experience preferred but not required.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ABILITIES

- Must be trusted members of the communities they will be assigned to serve.
- Exhibits interpersonal qualities and skills necessary to promote teamwork, respect for diversity, individual self-esteem, and community mobilization.
- Comfortable with working directly in the community and in non-traditional settings.
- Exhibits organizational skills necessary to solve problems.
- Exhibits professional work habits, including an awareness of the appropriate roles and responsibilities of a CHW.
- Knowledge of relationships between risk factors and evidence of health problems.
- Ability to maintain clients' confidentiality.
- Proficiency with computers and data collection.
- Ability to organize, prioritize and plan/schedule work tasks to meet deadlines.
- Cultural competency skills in working with under-served communities.
- Demonstrates ability to work independently without supervision and as part of a team.

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- Demonstrates knowledge or the ability to find community resources and programs for persons with asthma and other chronic diseases.
- Ability to exercise good judgment in the delivery of professional services.
- Must possess the ability to handle sensitive and confidential situations.
- Multicultural and/or bilingual capabilities are strongly preferred.
- Resident of New Haven strongly preferred.
- Semi-flexible schedule. Additional weekend and evening hours are occasionally required to meet peak workloads, emergencies, and accommodate families.

LICENSES AND CERTIFICATIONS

A valid Connecticut Driver's License may be required for transportation between various sites. Certified Community Health Worker preferred but not required.