

# ASTHMA-FRIENDLY SCHOOLS

---

An Overview



Massachusetts Coalition  
For Occupational Safety And Health

How do you think school  
building conditions affect  
students' health? Your health?

# Asthma & Schools – Why?

## Asthma: Leading chronic disease causing school absenteeism<sup>1</sup>

- High rates of asthma in Massachusetts (14% in Boston)<sup>2</sup>
- Children who aren't in school **can't learn**
- Custodians and teachers also have high rate of **work-related asthma**<sup>3</sup>

## Poor Indoor Air Quality:

- Can cause **chronic respiratory problems**, headaches, dizziness, dry eyes and throat and other serious health problems<sup>4</sup>
- Reduces **school staff's ability** to perform specific mental tasks requiring concentration, calculation or memory

**Healthy, high performing schools = healthy, high performing students**

# Unhealthy Environments – the Asthma Connection

## Triggers commonly found in buildings include:

- Animal Dander
- Cockroach Body Parts and Feces
- Dust Mites
- Mold Spores
- Pollens from outdoors
- Tobacco Smoke

## Bronchial irritants include:

- Chemicals and Cleaners
- Fragrances
- Fumes
- Outdoor pollution



What is an example of a **policy** you **must follow**?

How can we **change** or **make new** **policies** in our schools?

# Where should we start?

## Conduct a building or classroom walk-through

- Use the “Environmental walk-through checklist” or download the **EPA Air Quality Tools for Schools App**
- Use these tools to assess a full school and/or an area of your choice (i.e. classroom, auditorium)
- Identify and prioritize problem areas
- Consider resources and people available – then take the **next steps**



# Five Ways to Take Action

- 1) Participate in your school's Wellness Council or Environmental Committee
- 2) Promote green cleaning practices by providing green cleaning products to teachers and staff
- 3) Submit work orders for needed repairs
- 4) Monitor pest control strategies
- 5) Maintain clean trash & recycling systems

# Participate on the School Wellness Council

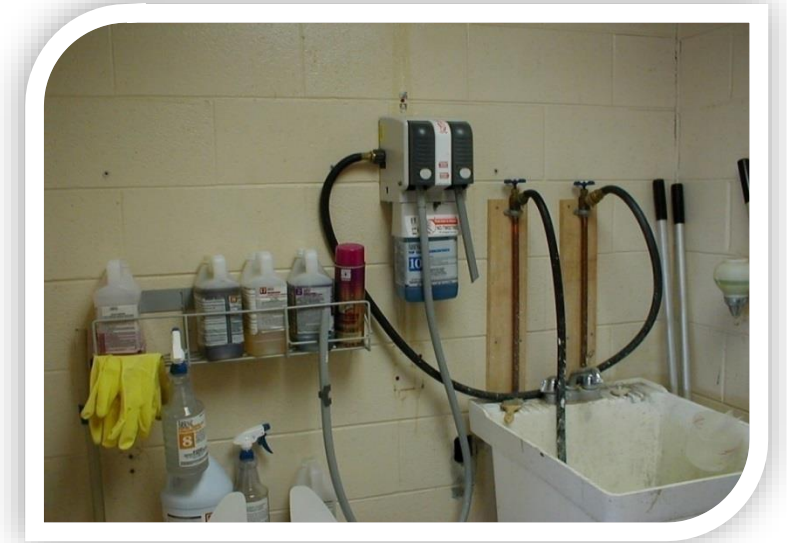
- Your **voice** and your **expertise** about the building is valuable
- MA encourages schools to **include a 'Healthy School Environment'** as a policy component
- Build a **diverse team** (*include custodian, recycling coordinator, nurse, etc.*)
- Create an **Action Plan** with your Wellness Council
  - Use **the Environmental walk-through checklist results** to address health and safety issues





# Clean For Health

- Keep the dirt out
- Use **less-toxic, third-party certified** cleaning products and hand soaps
- Update and **maintain** equipment
- **Sanitize/ disinfect only high risk areas** and areas regulated for early education
- Breathe easier – **clean doesn't have an odor**



# Identify & Monitor Work Orders

- **Share results** of environmental walk-throughs with custodial staff
- **Take pictures** to document repairs needed and progress
- **Submit work** orders for the “top” problems in the school
- Work with custodians (or person in charge of work orders) to **track and/or resubmit prior work orders** if unfulfilled



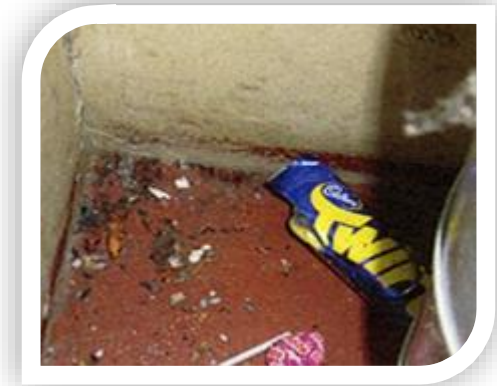
# Monitor Pest Control Strategies

## Food + Water + Shelter = Pests

- Integrated Pest Management (IPM): a **systematic strategy for managing pests** that considers prevention, avoidance, monitoring and suppression.
- IPM regulations only allow **pesticide use as a last resort**

## Each school must have:

- An IPM plan specific to your building's pest problems
- Staff person identified as IPM Coordinator
- IPM log available at all times



# Maintain Clean Trash & Recycling

- **Helps reduce clutter, dust and pests**
- **Work with school's Recycling Coordinator to ensure:**
  - Signage is appropriately placed
  - Students and staff are educated properly about what can be recycled
  - Areas are kept clean and free of equipment, e-waste, unwanted desks, chairs etc.
  - The school's recycling process is clear



# Sources

<sup>1</sup>Healthy Schools, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/asthma/index.htm>

<sup>2</sup>Pediatric Asthma in Massachusetts 2008-2009, MA Department of Public Health, Bureau of Environmental Health

<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dph/environmental/tracking/asthma-08-09.pdf>

<sup>3</sup>Occupational Lung Disease Bulletin, MA Department of Public Health Occupational Health Surveillance Program

<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dph/occupational-health/sensor-lung-disease-bulletins/august2010.pdf>

<sup>4</sup>Indoor Environmental Quality, The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health

<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/indoorenv/chemicalsodors.html>