

**Our Children, Our Families Council**  
**Summary of the Asthma Task Force**  
*(Last Updated 6/15/15)*

**Goals of the Effort**

The goals of the Asthma Task Force (ATF) are to prevent asthma, reduce asthma disparities, and improve the quality of life for people with asthma who live or work in the City and County of San Francisco, by the use of advocacy, legislative action and citywide strategies.

**Focal Population of the Effort**

While the ATF works to reduce the prevalence of asthma across the city of San Francisco in all demographic groups, the ATF focuses on improving outcomes in San Francisco's low-income neighborhoods, where the greatest asthma disparities exist.

**Impact**

Since it was created in 2001, the ATF has undertaken several efforts toward its aforementioned goals. In the first ten years of the collaborative, when the group operated under the Board of Supervisors, the ATF pursued many initiatives in the fields of Child Care, Clinical Care, Community & Policy Advocacy, Housing Habitability, Outdoor Air Pollution, and Public Schools. (For a full list of the ATF's accomplishments within its first 10 years, please see the ATF's Report to the Board of Supervisors linked below.) Since the ATF's Board of Supervisors' mandate sunset in 2011, the ATF has continued to operate as a community coalition, and continues to oversee important efforts. Specifically, the ATF managed the million-dollar settlement from the Mirant Power Plant to ensure the funds were spent in impactful ways to reduce asthma's prevalence in disadvantaged communities. Among other things, the settlement funds were spent on retrofitting homes adjacent to freeways and funding asthma educator positions at the Potrero Hill Health Center and at San Francisco General Hospital. The ATF was also influential in reducing the use of bleach for disinfecting and sanitizing in childcare settings through a 2013 report (also linked below). As a result of ATF efforts, roughly 200 sites across the city received a subsidy to replace bleach with a less-harmful alternative, including 100% participation in SFUSD childcare sites.

**Challenges**

Since the ATF's Board of Supervisors' mandate sunset in 2011, maintaining the same level of productivity and influence has been difficult. Since 2011, the ATF has operated largely without funding, such that responsibility to keep the group running falls on Karen Cohn, the Program Manager of the Children's Environmental Health Promotion Program who volunteers to lead the ATF on the side.

**Origins of the Effort**

The San Francisco Board of Supervisors created the Asthma Task Force in 2001 legislation to address the epidemic of asthma through primary prevention strategies with an emphasis on reducing asthma disparities disproportionately affecting lower income communities in San Francisco. The legislated task force came about due to the efforts of Bayview Hunters Point community activists and allies who identified asthma as a key issue for school children in Bayview Hunters Point and for all age groups citywide. Over 75 individuals representative of community advocates, health professionals such as physicians, nurse practitioners, nurses, respiratory therapists, pharmacists and health educators, representatives of the Department of Public Health (SFDPH), the Department of the Environment and other City agencies have served as members in the ten-year history of the Task Force.

In June of 2011, the legislated ATF reached its sunset date and immediately transitioned to a community coalition of the same name, operating in cooperation with a non-profit fiscal sponsor, the Asthma Resource Center of San Francisco, Inc. The ATF has operated continually since becoming a community coalition, focused on the same objectives but with a reduction in staff support and funding.

## **Leading the Effort**

The current leader of the ATF is Karen Cohn, the Program Manager of the Children's Environmental Health Promotion Program at the San Francisco Department of Public Health. In its first 10 years of existence under the Board of Supervisors' mandate, the ATF received funding that enabled Department of Public Health staff to support the ATF through supplemental funding provided by the ATF. Since the ATF became a community coalition in 2011, Karen has been responsible for a significant portion of ATF operations as a volunteer. She now writes all the ATF reports, maintains the ATF's website, and runs the ATF's meetings every six months.

## **Members of the Effort**

As a community coalition, the ATF has approximately 28 members representing various stakeholders in asthma prevention across the city. Members include:

**Karen Cohn, Leader of the ATF**, Environmental Health Branch, Department of Public Health  
Anjali Nath, Breathe California  
Anne Kelsey Lamb, Regional Asthma Management & Prevention (RAMP)  
April Crawford, Interim Director, Bayview Health & Environmental Resource Center  
Cynthia Melgoza, Children's Environmental Health Promotion Program  
Dennis Jordan, Environmental Services Consultant  
Derek Smith, Tobacco Free Project, Department of Public Health  
Gloria Thornton, Asthma Resource of San Francisco, Inc.  
Jaclyn Cheves, Bay Area Community Resources  
Jane Evans, Nurse Manager, Department of Public Health  
Jennifer Flattery, Occupational Health Branch, California Department of Public Health  
Jenny Bard, American Lung Association  
Jia Min Cheng, SFGH Medical Legal Partnership  
Justine Weinberg, Occupational Health Branch, California Department of Public Health  
Karen Licavoli, Breathe CA  
Kimberlee Honda, Pediatric Asthma Clinic, San Francisco Department of Public Health  
Laura Fultz Stout, Regional Community Engagement Director, American Lung Association in California  
Luz Agana, San Francisco Department of Public Health  
Maria Luz Torre, Parent Voices Organizer, Children's Council of San Francisco  
Marie Hoemke, Asthma patient/parent  
Mary Anne Israel, Pediatric Asthma Clinic, San Francisco General Hospital  
Mary Jue, Program Administrator for Nursing Services, SFUSD  
Meets Thakur, UCSF  
Nannette Madden, Pediatric Asthma Clinic, San Francisco General Hospital  
Pat Coleman, Executive Director, Arthur H. Coleman Medical Center  
Peg Strub, Kaiser SF  
Rachel Fontenot, Development Manager, Rebuilding Together San Francisco  
Sraddha Mehta, Senior Environmental Justice Coordinator, SF Department of the Environment

## **Structure of the Effort**

Since its sunset in 2011, the ATF has continued to meet twice a year for networking purposes, sharing resources, and to discuss ways to further progress on its initiatives. The ATF also hosts the annual Asthma Network, a continuing education event for clinicians on asthma's causes and effects, and participates in RAMP, the regional asthma coalition.

## **The Role of Data**

The Asthma Task Force doesn't compile its own data set of asthma outcomes within San Francisco, but they make use of all local and national data available to inform priorities and initiatives. In its reports, such as the Report to the Board of Supervisors from 2011, the ATF incorporates data on asthma's prevalence and cost both locally and nationwide.

## Related Documents

- Asthma Task Force's website: < <http://sfgov.org/asthma/>>
- Asthma Task Force's 2011 Report to the Board of Supervisors:  
<[http://sfgov.org/asthma/sites/sfgov.org.asthma/files/migrated/FileCenter/Documents/AsthmaTaskForce/ATF\\_Reports/83\\_AstmaTaskForceReport\\_1211\\_FINAL.pdf](http://sfgov.org/asthma/sites/sfgov.org.asthma/files/migrated/FileCenter/Documents/AsthmaTaskForce/ATF_Reports/83_AstmaTaskForceReport_1211_FINAL.pdf)>
- Asthma Task Force's 2013 Update: Bleach-free Disinfection & Sanitizing for Childcare  
<[http://sfgov.org/asthma/sites/sfgov.org.asthma/files/migrated/FileCenter/Documents/AsthmaTaskForce/ATF\\_Advocacy/Our\\_work\\_in\\_child\\_care\\_settings/SF\\_Asthma\\_Task\\_Force\\_Update\\_Report\\_Jan2013.pdf](http://sfgov.org/asthma/sites/sfgov.org.asthma/files/migrated/FileCenter/Documents/AsthmaTaskForce/ATF_Advocacy/Our_work_in_child_care_settings/SF_Asthma_Task_Force_Update_Report_Jan2013.pdf)>
- April 2014 Mirant Settlement Progress Report: Potrero Hill Community Health Projects
- 2011 Ordinance authorizing expenditure of the Mirant Settlement