

## **Fight Asthma Milwaukee (FAM) Allies** **National Exemplary Award - 2007**

**Background:** FAM Allies was established in 1994 by health care providers in Milwaukee who collaborated to provide new family and community education programs. FAM Allies is a coalition of agencies and individuals led by Children's Hospital and Health System. FAM Allies works with children and families connecting them to caring people, reducing hospital stays and supporting healthy lives. An important aspect of the program is the elimination of disparities in childhood asthma outcomes through community organizing and advocacy, increasing parent leadership skills and their participation in FAM Allies.

Milwaukee County has more than 30,000 children with asthma. The geographic focus for targeted interventions is the central city of Milwaukee, including 17 neighborhood strategic planning areas. Seventy percent of the children hospitalized for asthma live in 11 targeted central city neighborhoods. Eighty-four percent of these high-risk children are African American or Latino, and two-thirds are covered by Medicaid, Badger Care (a Wisconsin state-sponsored program, SCHIP), or are uninsured.

Several action strategies are critical to FAM: Commit to coalition principles; Push the limits of the healthcare system to address social and environmental factors associated with asthma as well as medical care; Target specific populations in a concentrated geographic area to achieve the most effective outcomes; Engage families most affected by asthma in solving problems and making community decisions; Eliminate the root causes of poor asthma control, which includes lack of knowledge, barriers to access to medical care and medications, addiction to nicotine in tobacco, and unsafe home environments; Develop useful reminders and reinforce education to continually advance guideline adherence by clinicians and patients; Strive to sustain and institutionalize effective elements of programs; Use in-kind support from affiliated organizations to stabilize coalition activities between grants; and, Deliver significant value to both volunteers and contributors.

**Partners:** Children's Hospital and Health System, Medical College of Wisconsin, Family House, American Lung Association of WI, Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare System, Aurora Health Care (Largest health care in Wisconsin), Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee, Milwaukee Area Health Education Center, Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS), 16<sup>th</sup> St. Community Health Center, Health and Wellness Enterprises, Parent Leaders, City of Milwaukee Health Department (MHD), University of Wisconsin Center for Tobacco Research and Intervention, Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services (WDHFS), and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR).

### **Key Drivers and Program Areas:**

**Committed Leaders and Champions:** FAM Allies Steering Committee members develop strategies, activities and methods that contribute to the coalition's success: (1) Use outcome data to promote change - everyone in FAM knows: the goals to improve the quality of life of children with asthma and their families; reduce hospitalizations, emergency visits, childcare and school absences due to asthma; and eliminate disparities in childhood asthma outcomes in Milwaukee; how to measure progress by tracking these goals; share outcome data with everyone; and, are committed to principles that include: (a) pursuing concrete, attainable goals; (b) diversity in membership; (c) mutual respect, understanding and trust; (d) collaborative partnerships in activities; (e) building on strengths and resources in the community; (f) promoting learning and empowerment that addresses social inequities; (g) disseminating knowledge and findings to all partners; and, (h) leveraging coalition partnerships to enable each agency to expand community resources to control asthma; (2) Link performance appraisals and reports to coalition members, the community, and funders to these outcomes; (3) Demonstrate perseverance by choosing goals carefully when developing a 2001 community action plan with the support of Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) Allies Against Asthma program. Key stakeholders identified both problems and assets and prioritized evidence-based solutions; (4) Accept uncertainty and test new possibilities, which included new strategies to engage affected families through the efforts of the Parent and Neighborhood Organizing Committee. This was conceived by MHD and led by grassroots community-based organization Family House has succeeded in building parent leaders who want to address home environmental triggers; and, (5) Creating their own champions through leadership development in committee activities.

**Strong Community Ties:** FAM Allies Family and Community Education and Parent and Neighborhood Organizing Committees develop strategies, activities and methods to maintain strong community ties. FAM uses unique methods to motivate the community to participate in program decisions and activities. (1) Focus on relationships in everything FAM does is important - FAM Allies is visible in the community. Since 2000, coalition director has

discussed asthma management on local TV 6 times, national TV once with 261 stories reaching 8 million viewers, local radio 5 times, statewide radio 3 times, and local newspaper once. More than 12 local agencies are involved in FAM, so local needs can be met by local people/resources. FAM hires and trains from the local community – i.e., Children’s Health Education Center. Target community is more accepting of services since FAM learns what is needed and desired by it to reach out to provide care. (2) Treat relationships like they really matter – FAM represents diverse stakeholders, and planning table is open to local community members. FAM shows support for community by testifying at City Council hearings on smoke-free workplaces. (3) FAM works around the needs of the community by being responsive, it meets in the highest risk neighborhood monthly, occasionally on Saturdays when most convenient for local parents.

**High-Performing Collaborations and Partnerships:** Funding and technical assistance from the RWJF Allies Against Asthma (AAA) program created strategies and methods for sustaining our high-performing collaborations. Strategies include: (1) Partnering with everyone - FAM Allies was built on what already exists. FAM evolved from academicians, added health care providers, community health educators and local health department leaders, were strengthened by state and national experts and Medicaid financing, then made advances with environmental specialists, parent leaders and advocates. FAM also shares everything that they can. There is no charge for participation at meetings or for educational materials. (2) Sharing everything that they can with other coalitions in Wisconsin (through the Wisconsin Asthma Coalition (WAC)) and in the AAA program so others don’t have to reinvent resources. (3) Collaborating with established organizations listed as key partners to build credibility.

**Integrated Health Care Services:** The WAC and FAM Allies Allergist Outreach Asthma Education Program and the FAM Allies Teach Asthma Management Workshops are clinical quality improvement (CQI) programs that promote integrating and linking health care services. Communication and coordination across the asthma care team addresses the needs of both providers and patients.

FAM educates clinical care teams by enlisting physician champions, especially allergists and pediatricians from the Medical College of Wisconsin/Children’s Hospital, Aurora Health Care, and 16<sup>th</sup> St. Community Health Center to educate primary care providers. They work with clinical care teams to improve through case-based learning using current national guidelines. They address the teams’ needs by customizing presentations to the unique needs of individual practices of physicians, nurses and staff, and evaluate their own performance after every session. In addition, FAM facilitates communication across the care team to coordinate services by accepting referrals of high risk patients for home-based asthma care.

FAM promotes patient and provider interaction by helping deliver new services, such as how to conduct motivational interviewing in tobacco cessation counseling and how to perform spirometry to assess pulmonary function of patients. They promote patient education at clinical care sites by providing a 90-page bilingual Tool Kit (refer to Lessons Learned) including a triplicate asthma action plan, copy ready, on-line and CD-ROM formats.

**Tailored Environmental Interventions:** FAM Allies Nurse Education, Case Management and Care Coordination Committee integrates health care services and addresses environmental triggers. They incorporate environmental trigger education and management in this program with significant impact. FAM educates clinical care teams on environmental trigger assessment and management and assists providers with environmental management. Nurses in homes, schools, parishes, health plans and clinics assess trigger sensitivity and exposure in clinical interviews using the National Environmental & Educational Foundation Pediatric Asthma Initiative questionnaire. FAM has diagnosed environmental triggers in the homes of 183 children and allergies in 94 children enrolled in our Milwaukee Healthy Homes Demonstration Project. Clinicians are trained to provide tailored environmental education and counseling at their sites through the CQI and nurse case management programs. Outreach nurses tailor strategies to individual patient sensitivities. Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare System, Milwaukee Health Department, Medical College of Wisconsin, and Aurora Visiting and Parish Nurse programs all partner in FAM Allies to provide home asthma visits. Additionally, school environment also is addressed through effectively training approximately 400 teachers annually since 2002 and through a past Milwaukee Public Schools U.S. EPA Tools for Schools initiative.

**Positive Health Outcomes:** FAM Allies Surveillance and Program Evaluation Committee tracks and measures health outcomes goals. The qualitative and quantitative outcome data and intermediate process outcomes demonstrate our coalition’s impact on our community. (Panel presentation will cover more). Milwaukee has had biggest reduction of hospitalizations by county. FAM is demonstrating to state that they are saving the state money.

**Program Sustainability and Financing:** FAM Allies was established in 1994 by health care providers in Milwaukee who collaborated to provide new family and community education programs. Key milestones included: (1) CDC grant established first fiscal agent ALA of Wisconsin; (2) U.S. EPA grant developed asthma outreach services at 16<sup>th</sup> St. Community Health Center and supported an asthma educator at 2<sup>nd</sup> fiscal agent Aurora Sinai Medical Center; (3) Children's Health Education Center partnered with a dozen agencies in developing the Awesome Asthma School Days program for children; (4) RWJF awarded Children's Hospital and Health System with 3 asthma grants: Allies Against Asthma, Emergency Department Demonstration Project, and Parent Mentor Study; (5) Merck funded Physician Asthma Care Education seminars; (6) CDC cooperative agreement with State of Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services to build capacity and continue support to FAM Allies; (7) U.S. EPA Tools for Schools project at Milwaukee Public Schools; (8) HUD grant to MHD and FAM Allies partners for Milwaukee Healthy Homes Demonstration Project; and , (9) Family House engages parents to understand their needs and build their leadership skills.

FAM Allies is staffed by several key personnel from the Medical College of Wisconsin (MCW), Children's Health Education Center, Family House, Children's Hospital of Wisconsin, Children's Health Alliance of Wisconsin, Health and Wellness Enterprises. FAM Allies is currently financed by several sources: MCW's "Healthier Wisconsin Partnership Program" \$450,000 from 2006-09; CDC/State of WDHFS \$119,500 from 2001-07; Glaxo Smith Klein and AstraZeneca for the Allergist Outreach Asthma Education Program \$270,000 (including statewide activities) from 2003-07; and, In-kind agency and volunteer efforts, meeting space and indirect costs exceeded \$654,000 from 2002-06 and continue today.

Aurora Health Care supports the education of practitioners, case management, parish, homes to schools to church to clinic, plus school nurses through own revenue, but has some grant support. Aurora & Children's Hospital pays for some school nurses who are assigned to several different schools and manage various diseases (including asthma). MPS also has their own school nurses, but the nurses from both Aurora/Children's Hospital work together with MPS nurses. Parishes try to recruit nurses in their congregation to assist in some standard health care support, however, Aurora will employ parish nurses as well and assigns them to several parishes. They not only will do education, but assist with flu vaccination, blood pressure monitoring and other preventative health measures. FAM Allies has become part of the health care infrastructure in the community. More than 30 agencies send representatives to full coalition meetings held every 4 months.

### **Lessons Learned:**

- It is important to provide tools that community and health providers need and could be used across competing systems and were culturally sensitive.
  - Developed the Tool Kit. Covenant Medical group, working with FAM, recognized the importance of addressing asthma, so installed an asthma clinic that provided high quality care for both kids and adults with asthma. FAM's Quality Health Care Committee reviewed the systems processes, and recognized needs for Tool Kit which was designed to promote patient education at clinical care sites. Asthma education material is in a spiral bound notebook, which is provided as a part of the training. They looked at existing educational materials and reviewed languages and cultural sensitivity. Broad review included representatives from 10 different agencies plus 12 additional collaborators. Tool Kit is 65 pages in English, with office tools (environmental information, as well), 30 pages in Spanish, asthma action plan. Also, provides prayers and other resources for the partners in the faith community who support the work of keeping their congregation healthy.
  - Work on what is needed by the families – community support effort. Support families in crisis that might have issues to deal with beyond asthma.

FAM recognizes that creating homes that are affordable and healthy not only supports the family of a child with asthma but neighborhood revitalization. MHD has worked on lead abatement projects with landlords for years, and built off a decade of success by evolving from lead-safe only focus to the Healthy Homes model, which includes asthma trigger reduction focus. There are triggers that can be remediated, and landlords are more responsive, especially as community is focused on Healthy Homes. FAM is developing a relationship with neighborhood Home Depot store. Overall, FAM works with both tenants and landlords about the role they play to they improve children's lives with asthma.

- Parents and Community Members need to be an active part of the Coalition – There are key roles that parents and community have in the coalition, especially by either helping to identify the needs of the community or how to organize/educate to help the community. Having representatives in the various teams provides insight – for example, was able to look at most disadvantaged zip code in Milwaukee and had parent support in going door-

to-door in order to poll other parents so as to identify asthma in the community members.

An obstacle is the fact that, because of housing stock and the fact that there is a lot of movement in the community, children and adults with asthma are difficult to keep track of. It is important to keep a core group of community members/parents engaged, and FAM recognizes the importance that projects directed by community with its own drivers and victories are supported. There is a strong need for participating community members to encourage others to come on board. FAM is very sensitive to the needs of Family House and works closely with it to offer resources that are needed in order for all activities to be sustainable.

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**Contact Information:**

**Managing Agent:** Children's Hospital and Health System

**Program Location:** Children's Hospital of Wisconsin and more than 20 partner agencies

**Program Coverage:** Milwaukee County, especially central city neighborhoods

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