

Vermont Asthma Program

Helping Vermonters

Breathe Easier

September 2014

Greetings from the Vermont Asthma Program!

Once again, Vermont has been named to the [State Honor Roll of Asthma and Allergy Policies](#) by the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA). Vermont was one of eight states and the District of Columbia to make the list. The long list of criteria recognize states for policies like students' right to self-carry asthma and anaphylaxis medications in schools. Congratulations, Vermont!

New guidelines for providers appeared in the journal *Annals of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology*. The guidelines weigh in on asthma management by giving advice on what patients should do when symptoms start to appear. Similar to the system used for Asthma Action Plans, the guidelines divide action into red, yellow and green zones. [Read about the guidelines](#) or access [the article itself](#).

The Vermont Asthma Program is happy to announce its use of VHCURES in exploration of billing code utilization for asthma education coverage. Vermont is one of a handful of states that are exploring the reimbursement of asthma education services to Medicaid beneficiaries. We are continuing to make strides in linking health systems and will keep you updated.

The Vermont Asthma Program has been making progress in its use of VHCURES, an all-payers all claims database (APCD) specific to VT residents. APCDs offer a new and important data source for public health. Public health surveillance typically relies on population-based surveys, disease registries, and hospital discharge data to monitor and assess health outcomes and trends. APCDs provide some fill to the public health data gap by capturing health care service use across care settings (e.g., primary care, specialty care, outpatient services, laboratory testing, pharmacy data) and across payers. As the analytical capabilities of APCDs evolve, they offer opportunity and application to enhance the understanding of our population's health and link health outcomes to health care utilization. A department-wide training, sponsored by the Asthma Program, was held on August 22nd. Take a look at the [Final APCD Brief](#).

September is National Preparedness Month

As we prepare to head back to school, September is the perfect time to make sure our children and patients are up to date on check-ups and our Asthma Action Plans are complete and on file with the school, coaches and parents. Find Health Vermont's Asthma Action Plan template [here](#). See more ideas for preparing for asthma below.

Upcoming Events

[*Smoke Free Housing Summit:](#)

September 24

[*National Healthy Homes Training:](#)

September 29

[*Asthma Advisory Panel Meeting:](#)

January 9, 2015

Did you know?

In people with asthma, the presence of mold can trigger symptoms: chest tightness, shortness of breath, wheezing or an asthma attack.

Asthma costs in the United States amount to \$50 billion dollars each year (1).

An emergency department visit for asthma costs about 5 times as much as an office-based visit (1).

Fact Sheets

[Asthma Goal Tracker 2014](#)

[All Payers Claims Database Brief](#)

[Mold and Your Health](#)

[How to Write Easy-to-Read Health Materials](#)

Publications

[Vermont State Asthma Plan](#)

[The Burden of Asthma in Vermont](#)

[Healthy Vermonters 2020](#)



Plan Now. Work Together. Be Ready.

NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS MONTH
September 2010 | ready.gov

Asthma and Environmental Health:

-The National Center for Healthy Housing will be coming to Vermont to do a National Healthy Homes Training on September 29. The training is designed for community health workers, public health nurses, health educators and others. The one-day course will take place from 8:30 am- 4:30 pm at the Vermont Department of Health in Burlington. For more information, contact Andrea.Haugen@state.vt.us

-For further information on the connection between mold and health, the VDH has released a [Fact Sheet](#) on mold. The publication touches on mold in housing, health effects, how to deal with mold, facts and misconceptions and where to find more information.

School Health and Asthma

-The American Lung Association has a [back-to-school checklist](#) to help families stay on top of the game when returning to school this fall. Find a step-by-step plan to follow that details asthma education, communication with the school nurse, pediatrician visits, asthma action plans and staying on top of immunizations.

-Back-to-school Immunization Reminder: Vermont immunization rates lag behind other states in certain areas. This is troubling, particularly in light of higher asthma rates in the state. Here are some facts about immunization status in Vermont:

- After three years of progress in increasing immunization rates, rates for individual vaccines like measles, polio, pertussis and pneumococcal dropped in 2012.
- 93 percent of teenagers in Vermont are up to date with their tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis boosters. This is up five percent in the past three years and better than the national rate.

Focusing on increasing immunization rates for patients with asthma can help reduce morbidity and mortality in this population.

Quick Links

[VDH Asthma Program](#)

[Controlling Asthma](#)

[Tools for Managing Asthma](#)

[Asthma Surveillance](#)

[Resources & Information](#)

[Envision Program](#)



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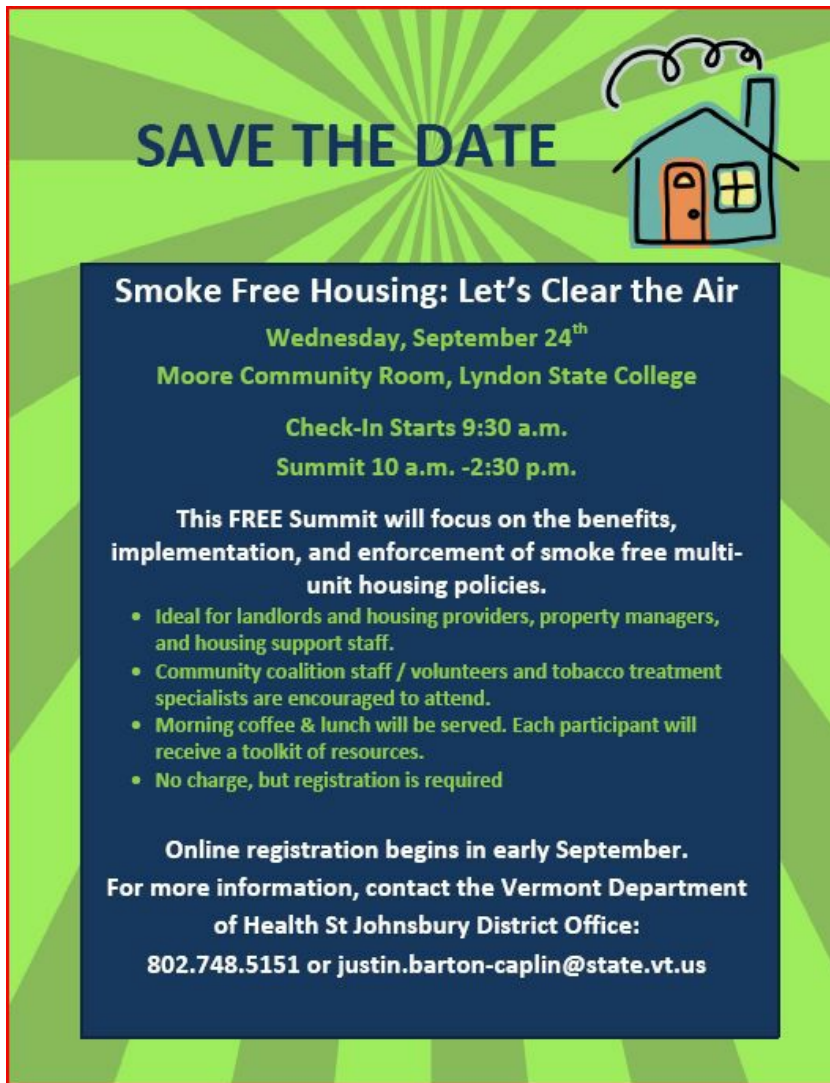
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Smoking and Asthma

-The Smoke Free Housing Summit is a free event focusing on the logistics of smoke-free multi-unit housing policies including benefits, implementation and enforcement. Environmental tobacco smoke exposure and current smoking have been found to be the leading environmental factors associated with severe asthma in the New England states. 15% of adult Vermonters with asthma live in homes where someone has smoked inside in the last week. The summit is designed for landlords, housing providers, property managers and housing support staff in addition to tobacco treatment specialists and community coalition staff or volunteers. The event is 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. on September 24th at Lyndon State College. For more information, contact Tin (Justin) Barton-Caplin at 802.748.5151 or at Justin.barton-caplin@state.vt.us. [Online registration](#) for the event is now open.



The poster features a green sunburst background. At the top left, the text 'SAVE THE DATE' is written in large, bold, dark blue letters. To the right is a simple line drawing of a house with a chimney emitting smoke. Below this, a dark blue rectangular box contains white text. The text in the box includes the event title, date, location, check-in and summit times, a description of the summit's focus, a bulleted list of details, and contact information for registration.

SAVE THE DATE

Smoke Free Housing: Let's Clear the Air
Wednesday, September 24th
Moore Community Room, Lyndon State College

Check-In Starts 9:30 a.m.
Summit 10 a.m. -2:30 p.m.

This FREE Summit will focus on the benefits, implementation, and enforcement of smoke free multi-unit housing policies.

- Ideal for landlords and housing providers, property managers, and housing support staff.
- Community coalition staff / volunteers and tobacco treatment specialists are encouraged to attend.
- Morning coffee & lunch will be served. Each participant will receive a toolkit of resources.
- No charge, but registration is required

Online registration begins in early September.
For more information, contact the Vermont Department of Health St Johnsbury District Office:
802.748.5151 or justin.barton-caplin@state.vt.us

-While controversy around the safety of e-cigarettes remains, [new research](#) out of South Korea tested the effects of e-cigarettes on airways in mice. They exposed mice to the equivalent of a "pack-a-day" e-cigarette habit and found that this nicotine delivery method exacerbated asthma symptoms in the mice. The nicotine seemed to work as an allergen and increased both airway hyperresponsiveness and airway inflammation. Because this study focused on nicotine, more research is needed to examine the other chemicals present in the e-cigarette delivery system.



-Existing research has shown that smoking during pregnancy can increase the risk of children having asthma, allergies and eczema. [New research](#) suggests that this risk continues even into the teenage years. Vermont has above average rates of smoking during pregnancy. This study was particularly powerful given the long-term follow-up of participants and the large numbers of participants.

Asthma and Health Literacy

-The Department of Health Asthma Program is forming a Health Literacy Workgroup to explore ongoing ways to improve provider-patient relationships and empower patients to self-manage asthma. We will also keep in touch via the newsletter on current health literacy topics. The group will have quarterly meetings. For more information and if you are interested in joining the workgroup, contact Jane Wolforth at jane.wolforth@state.vt.us

-In order to effectively self-manage asthma, patients must fully understand the information they receive. More severe asthma is seen among individuals with lower levels of education. Asthmatics with a high school education or less are significantly more likely to have poor asthma control as compared with those who attended of graduated college. In order to effectively communicate health information to patients of all backgrounds, we can gear our written asthma information to address all reading levels and backgrounds. [This tool](#) gives guidelines to help deliver easy-to-understand health information to readers regardless of age, education level or background.

-Vermont celebrated World Breastfeeding Week in August by gathering moms in Winooski for the annual Big Latch On. Breastfeeding seems to play a role in having a protective effect against asthma. With high asthma rates, Vermont's push to make the state an even friendlier place for breastfeeding moms should be an all-around win. Visit [UNICEF](#) to explore some of the many studies that have shown positive asthma outcomes in babies and children from their breastfeeding mothers.

Please keep in touch!

Let us know if you have any questions -- or if there's an asthma-related issue you'd like to know more about.

Take care,

Jane

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1. Sullivan, Ashley F., et al. "An update on United States asthma centers: 2013." *Annals of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology* (2014).