

**2016 Detroit Asthma Summit:**  
**Disparities and Solutions**  
May 2016

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The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) released the *Detroit: Current Status of the Asthma Burden (March 2016)*, which reported that the asthma burden in Detroit is greater than the overall burden in the state of Michigan. The key findings of the report indicate Detroit experiences: higher prevalence of asthma among adults, higher rates of hospitalization due to asthma, increased persistence of asthma among children covered by Medicaid, greater reliance on emergency department for asthma care in children on Medicaid, and higher rates of asthma-related deaths. Stakeholders in the community acknowledge that the severity of the public health situation requires a solutions-focused approach to identify and examine ways to reduce the asthma burden in Detroit.

Recognizing the urgency, multiple stakeholders, including the Michigan DHHS, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 5 coordinated the *2016 Detroit Asthma Summit* (“Summit”). The Summit brought together representatives from the State, city of Detroit, local community organizations, citizens, and university partners to present on the state of asthma in southeast Michigan. It provided opportunities for education, collaboration, and identification of strategies to reduce disparities and improve asthma outcomes in Detroit. The audience included public health departments, environmental organizations, community health organizations, community advocates, health care professionals, housing specialists, school staff, policy makers, and citizens.

**At-a-Glance**

- **Participants:** 108 attendees from across Detroit, the State of Michigan, and region
- **Purpose:** To bring together Detroit residents, health systems and community organizations to learn more about Detroit’s asthma problems, and find ways to work together towards solutions
- **Structure:** The Summit comprised a series of plenary presentations and an afternoon small group discussion session

Participants were greeted by Dr. Abdul El-Sayed, the Executive Director of the Detroit Health Department. Attendees received a comprehensive overview of the asthma burden in Detroit to more fully understand the disparities faced by the population within the city, as well as compared to the rest of the State. Various subject matter experts presented on asthma triggers in the home, air pollution issues, asthma challenges in schools, current asthma research and interventions, and resources on indoor and outdoor air quality.

Participants had the opportunity to contribute to the conversation on asthma during the small group discussion sessions in the afternoon. Each discussion session was led by a facilitator and subject matter expert. Participants joined one of six discussion topic areas: Schools, Home Intervention, Research and Policy, Outdoor Air, Health Equity, and Healthcare Access. The discussions provided an opportunity to solicit input from the many stakeholders in the community and generate possible solutions to the asthma challenges in Detroit. The common themes discussed in these groups are presented below:

*Barriers:*

- Political will
- Lack of resources and/or capacity (personnel, financial, other)

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- Accessibility: transportation, scheduling
- Data sharing issues/workflow among providers and facilities
- Lack of understanding of triggers, asthma management
- Literacy and language barriers (includes communicating at various capability levels)

*Needs:*

- Educate and promote health and environmental literacy
  - Parents
    - Medical community/healthcare personnel (physicians, school nurses)
  - School personnel
  - Community members
  - Patients
  - Policy makers
- Getting the right people at the table to plan a way forward
- Build political capital
- Better understanding of attributable and cumulative risk (pollutants)
- Resources (access to/availability of resources and coordination of existing)

*Potential Solutions*

- Creating a collaborative group with the right people at the table to work towards addressing the many aspects that influence asthma burden in Detroit
- Educate and promote health and environmental literacy in all sectors, to include the political arena
- Expanding the healthcare provider accessibility within schools
- Addressing the transportation issues with service providers to ensure patients make it to healthcare appointments
- Coordinating use of existing resources to create robust interventions and programs within the community

Participants agreed that the Summit was a valuable opportunity to share information, understand current initiatives, and brainstorm ideas and potential solutions on the complicated issue of asthma in Detroit. Moving forward, the input will be used to plan future events and develop strategic goals for addressing the asthma burden in Detroit.

**Summit Planning Committee**

- **Asthma & Allergy Foundation of America-Michigan Chapter**
- **CLEARCorps Detroit**
- **Detroit Alliance for Asthma Awareness**
- Detroit Health Department
- Detroit Public Schools
- **Ecology Center**
- Green Door Initiative
- **Henry Ford Health System**
- **MI Air MI Health**
- Michigan Dept. of Environmental Quality-Air Quality Division
- **Michigan Dept. of Health & Human Services-Asthma Program**
- Molina Healthcare of Michigan
- U.S. EPA Region 5-Air & Radiation Division
- University of Michigan
- **Wayne Children's Healthcare Access Program**
- **Wayne State University**

**\*Sponsors are indicated in bold**

Additional sponsors: American Lung Association of the Midland States and the Center for Urban Responses to Environmental Stressors (CURES)