

# Recommendations

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

1. As asthma prevalence rates continue to rise among school children, it becomes more important than ever that the federal government encourage states to track asthma prevalence. Federal dollars should be provided to the states to help them accomplish this.
  - (A) Schools provide a place where asthma data can be collected. School nurses have access to asthma information, which has shown to be most reliable among younger school children, K-5.
  - (B) Once the asthma prevalence data is collected it should be made available to the federal, state and local health departments.
2. Additional federal money should be made available to those states that have the highest rates of asthma. This would not only encourage states to track the disease, but would also send money to the areas where there is the greatest need.
3. The Environmental Protection Agency has developed a program called *Tools for Schools* that is designed to help schools improve their indoor air quality as well as other environmental problems. The federal government should encourage schools to adopt this program, or comparable programs, by expanding its financial support to either the states or to the school districts that are the most in need.
4. The American Lung Association has developed a program for schools called *Open Airways*. This program is designed to be used to help asthmatic students better manage their disease. The federal government should encourage schools to adopt these programs by providing states with funds that they can distribute to school districts with the highest rates of asthma.
5. The federal government needs to continue its efforts to conduct research into the underlying causes of asthma and in particular into the reasons why poorer children and children living in urban areas are disproportionately affected.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE STATE GOVERNMENT

1. States should track asthma prevalence rates among their school children.
  - (A) School nurses provide a potential source of asthma data collection. Physical health forms, doctor's medication orders, parent-provided health history, and the students' own school health records should all be used when assessing asthma prevalence rates in schools.
  - (B) States should provide school nurses with electronic health reporting systems.
  - (C) Our studies have shown that the most reliable asthma prevalence data come from younger school children, preferably K-5. This is because older children often carry their own medications and do not always inform the school nurses of their disease.
2. States should adopt and implement legislation that stipulates school indoor air quality programs that provide ongoing maintenance and facility reviews. Legislation should also address siting of new schools, new construction guidelines when school buildings are occupied, and roof construction guidelines. Such legislation was adopted in Connecticut in 2003 as Public Act 03-220. It can be found on the Internet at:  
*<http://www.cga.state.ct.us/2003/act/Pa/2003PA-00220-R00HB-06426-PA.htm>*
3. EPA has developed a program called *Tools for Schools*, which is designed to help schools improve their indoor air quality as well as other environmental problems. The State should encourage school districts to adopt this program, or comparable programs, by providing funds to those school districts that are the most in need.

4. The American Lung Association has developed a program for schools called *Open Airways*. This program is designed to be used to help asthmatic students better manage their disease. The state should encourage schools to adopt these programs by providing funds to school districts that have the highest rates of asthma.
5. School bus idling outside of schools must be stopped. Although Connecticut has a law that forbids school bus idling for more than three minutes, (Public Act No. 02-56), the data collected in this study show that more than 50 percent of the schools surveyed still have school buses idling outside their buildings.
6. School pesticide use needs to be reduced. Even though Connecticut has a law in place to help reduce the regular use of pesticides in schools, this study shows that more than 20 percent of the schools responding still are using pesticides on a regular basis.
7. Schools should be encouraged to remove their wall-to-wall carpeting in classrooms. Those that cannot, should clean their carpets only when ventilation is on and only at a time when the carpets will quickly dry. Carpet cleaning guidance can be found on the website of the Institute of Inspection, Cleaning and Restoration at <http://www.iicrc.org/pdf/buydocs.pdf>.
  - (A) Those schools that feel carpets are important for learning reasons should be encouraged to use area rugs that can be picked up and cleaned easily, instead of wall-to-wall carpeting.
8. Schools should be appropriately ventilated to promote indoor air quality during school time and should remain ventilated in nonuse periods such as vacation weeks and summer months. Indoor air quality guidance is available on the EPA website at <http://cfpub.epa.gov/schools/index.cfm>.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS AND LOCAL AND REGIONAL BOARDS OF EDUCATION

1. Schools should have the best indoor air quality possible.
  - (A) Schools should be encouraged to adopt EPA's *Tools for Schools* or comparable programs.
2. School districts must enforce the state "no idling" school bus law that presently exists. Although the law, Public Act No. 02-56, forbids school bus idling for more than three minutes, the data collected in this study show that more than 50 percent of schools surveyed still have school buses idling outside their school buildings. Diesel exhaust is a known respiratory irritant and components of diesel exhaust are carcinogenic.
3. Roof leaks should be fixed as soon as possible.
4. Wall-to-wall carpeting should be eliminated from classrooms when possible. When not possible, carpets should be cleaned only when ventilation is on and only when they can dry quickly. Carpet cleaning guidance can be found on the website of the Institute of Inspection, Cleaning and Restoration at <http://www.iicrc.org/pdf/buydocs.pdf>.
  - (A) Those schools that feel carpets are important for learning reasons should be encouraged to use area rugs that can be picked up and cleaned easily, instead of wall-to-wall carpeting.



## A SURVEY OF ASTHMA PREVALENCE IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILDREN

5. Construction should be done preferably when children are not in school. If that is not possible, then methods should be implemented that will protect school children from harmful exposures. Schools having to do construction when students are in school should follow the “Indoor Air Quality Guidelines for Occupied Buildings Under Construction, Sheet Metal and Air Conditioning Contractors’ National Association, Inc.” (SMACNA), 1995.
6. Pesticides should only be used when needed and schools should not have regular monthly spraying contracts when there are no pest problems.
7. Cleaning agents should be carefully chosen and the least toxic products should be used.
8. Schools should be appropriately ventilated to promote indoor air quality during school time and should remain ventilated in nonuse periods such as vacation weeks and summer months. Indoor air quality guidance is available on the EPA website at <http://cfpub.epa.gov/schools/index.cfm>.