



BUILDING A FRAMEWORK FOR HEALTHY HOUSING

2008 National Healthy Homes Conference

A National Healthy Homes Policy Agenda

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Purpose

- Present policy strategies developed and supported by AFHH and NCHH
- Gain feedback from practitioners in diverse sectors
- Listen to and incorporate innovative ideas raised throughout the conference
- Build support for and consensus around a National Healthy Homes Policy Agenda



Why A National Policy Agenda?

- Home injuries: 2nd leading cause of death for children
- 2 million ER visits and 500,000 hospitalizations for asthma annually
- 250,000 children with lead poisoning
- Unhealthy housing contributes to cancer risks, impaired child development, death, and other health problems



Why A National Policy Agenda?

- Prevent illness, injury and death
- Reduce disparities
- Reduce health care costs
- Make housing affordable for all



Principles for Action

- Target the highest risk housing stock
- Incentivize private sector
- Correct market failures and eliminate inequalities
- Assist communities in addressing local conditions



Federal Action

1. Indoor Environmental Action Levels
2. TSCA Reform
3. Federal Property Standards
4. Capacity Building
5. Proven Education Programs
6. Promoting Holistic Programs
7. Hazard Disclosure
8. Healthy Homes Data
9. Housing Funding
10. Medical Reimbursements



1. Indoor Environmental Action Levels

- Require EPA to set and enforce standards for:
 - Carbon Monoxide
 - Radon
 - Formaldehyde
 - Other indoor environmental exposures



2. Toxic Substances Control Act Reform

- Reform the TSCA to:
 - Provide EPA with adequate resources and information
- EPA should:
 - Identify and prioritize chemical hazards in housing
 - Take action to protect against unnecessary or unreasonable risks



3. Federal Standards

- Promulgate minimum health standards for rental properties
- Develop Healthy Homes Guidelines for existing housing (“Healthy Homes Seal of Approval”)
- Broadly market the Energy Star with Indoor Air Package



4. Capacity Building

- Develop and deliver training for professional and community groups (e.g. architects, code inspectors, housing providers)
- Provide technical assistance, training, and grants for capacity building



5. Education

- Authorize a new grant program
 - Fund proven education programs
 - Target low-income and hard-to-reach population
- Sponsor a social marketing campaign
 - Raise visibility of healthy homes
 - Build broad support



6. Promoting Holistic Programs

- Make federal programs the model
- Authorize flexibility for federal grant programs
- Enable coordination among housing, health, and energy programs



7. Hazard Disclosure

- Amend the Federal Lead Hazard Disclosure Law
 - Require sellers and property owners to disclose hazards exceeding federal action levels to buyers and tenants



8. Healthy Homes Data

- Collect and report indicators of healthy housing at national, state, and top 50 municipal levels
- Work through existing surveys (e.g. AHS, ACS, NHANES)
- Document model systems for the collection of hazard data



9. Housing Funding

- Increase funding for affordable, healthy, sustainable housing
- Ensure housing occupied by low-income households meets Healthy Homes Guidelines
- Provide tax incentives and funding to offset healthy homes costs



10. Medical Reimbursements

- Establish Medicaid and Medicare reimbursement for environmental investigations and interventions for:
 - Asthma
 - Lead poisoning
 - Carbon monoxide poisoning
 - Residential Injuries
 - Other healthy homes hazards



State and Local Governments

1. Code Enactment and Enforcement
2. Direct Service Programs
3. Tax Benefits and Funding
4. State Insurance Regulators



1. Code Enactment and Enforcement

- Adopt and enforce the International Property Maintenance Code until a federal minimum health standard for rental properties is established



2. Direct Service Programs

- Agencies conducting in-home visits should provide:
 - Healthy homes assessments
 - Referrals



3. Tax Benefits and Funding

- Offer tax incentives, credits, and home repair grants for property owners
- Reimburse the cost of environmental investigations and interventions through Medicaid/SCHIP or other funds



4. State Insurance Regulators

- Require property insurance carriers to:
 - Provide coverage for environmental health hazards
 - Provide incentives to property owners meeting healthy homes standards and green building criteria



Private Sector



1. Builders and Affordable Housing Providers
2. Financial Institutions
3. Health Care Providers
4. Health Insurers
5. Pest Control Companies
6. Property and Casualty Insurers
7. Rental Property Owners
8. Consensus Standards Organizations
9. Home Inspectors
10. Realtors



1. Builders and Affordable Housing Providers

- Meet LEED-H or Green Communities Criteria for new construction and substantial rehabilitation
- Incorporate Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and smoke-free policies in multi-family housing



2. Financial Institutions

- Offer low-interest loans for:
 - Housing rehabilitation
 - Health hazard mitigation



3. Health Care Providers

- Conduct environmental health assessments when appropriate
- Recommend appropriate interventions



4. Health Insurers

- Reimburse for environmental investigations and interventions for:
 - Asthma
 - Lead poisoning
 - Carbon monoxide poisoning
 - Residential Injuries
 - Other healthy homes hazards



5. Pest Control Companies

- Adopt and market Integrated Pest Management (IPM) as a superior approach to pest infestation prevention and control



6. Property and Casualty Insurers

- Provide coverage for environmental health hazards
- Incentivize meeting healthy homes standards and green building criteria



7. Rental Property Owners

- Apply preemptive maintenance practices
- Remedy potential health hazards at unit turnover



8. Consensus Standards Organizations

- Submit the Healthy Homes Guidelines through ANSI to develop a national standard
- ICC should strengthen the International Property Maintenance and Existing Building Codes



9. Home Inspectors

- Home inspectors should:
 - Conduct comprehensively healthy homes assessments
 - Educate buyers
 - Serve as third-party verifiers for the Healthy Homes Seal of Approval



10. Realtors

- Market homes that meet:
 - Healthy Homes Seal of Approval
 - EPA Indoor Air Package
 - LEED-H or Green Communities



Conclusions

- All people deserve to live in affordable, healthy housing



Comments?



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