



# WISCONSIN ASTHMA PROGRAM (WAP)

## PROTECTING HEALTH, SAVING COSTS: WHY WISCONSIN NEEDS THE NATIONAL ASTHMA CONTROL PROGRAM

The **Wisconsin Asthma Program (WAP)** has been part of CDC's National Asthma Control Program (NACP) since 2001. They work alongside partners to improve the quality of asthma care, improve asthma management in schools, and foster policies to help reduce exposure to asthma triggers in outdoor, indoor, and workplace environments.

### WISCONSIN'S ASTHMA BURDEN:

- Asthma affects over 575,000 Wisconsinites, including 77,000 children.
- The burden is greatest among children, people of color, and low-income families, who experience higher rates of asthma attacks and hospitalizations.

### KEY OUTCOMES FROM THE WISCONSIN ASTHMA CONTROL PROGRAM:

WAP provides asthma self-management education (AS-ME) and a home environmental walkthrough to reduce adverse outcomes among people with poorly controlled asthma. Improved outcomes at 3-month follow-up included a 14% decrease in asthma emergency department (ED) visits and a 73% decrease in asthma hospitalizations.

WAP developed the **Asthma-Safe Homes Program** to help families reduce asthma triggers through home visits, repairs, and supplies. In 2019, 71 people participated in the program, which resulted in 79% fewer emergency department visits, 50% fewer hospitalizations, and 78% fewer missed school and workdays. The program was implemented in several communities by various partner organizations, and it saved families an average of nearly \$800 in emergency department visits and hospitalizations. This also reflected a **cost savings of \$117 per patient for taxpayers**. These outcomes influenced Medicaid to establish the program as a new CHIP Health Services Initiative (HIS) in 2021, which allowed Wisconsin to receive \$3M in funding.

### PATIENT SUCCESS STORY

Giana, a 5-year-old from Milwaukee, was experiencing frequent and severe asthma attacks—sometimes requiring emergency room visits up to four times a week. Concerned providers at Children's Hospital referred the family to a nurse who conducted a home visit. The inspection uncovered multiple environmental asthma triggers—mold on the ceiling from a leaking roof, and aging carpets that worsened Giana's symptoms.

The family was referred to the **Asthma-Safe Homes Program**. Within three days, the home received critical repairs: a new roof and new carpeting. Since those changes, Giana has not needed a single hospital visit in over five months.



In 2022, WAP launched an air monitoring and anti-idling pilot at Milwaukee schools. It now informs the 3-year EPA-funded project, Breathe S.M.A.R.T., which expands neighborhood air quality monitoring in high-burden communities.

WAP helped implement a **statewide pharmacist-provided medication therapy management program** for Medicaid patients. The program resulted in:

- Improved Asthma Control Test (ACT) scores for 62% of patients
- Reduced ED visits and hospitalizations
- Increased use of peak flow meters and asthma action plans

**National recognition includes:**

- EPA National Environmental Leadership Award in Asthma Management
- HUD 2023 Secretary's Award for Excellence in Healthy Homes

**WHY FEDERAL FUNDING MATTERS:**

WAP is funded solely by the NACP. Without this funding, the WAP would cease entirely. Wisconsin ranks 48 out of 50 states when it comes to state-level public health funding. There are Medicaid/CHIP dollars to fund the Asthma-Safe Homes Program activities, but these dollars are also at risk.

Without NACP and Medicaid/CHIP support:

- The Asthma Care Program and Asthma-Safe Homes Program will shut down.
- Key asthma staff at the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, University of Wisconsin-Madison, and Children's Hospital will be eliminated.
- Data-driven asthma surveillance and intervention planning will cease.
- School-based and community-based asthma supports will disappear.

**THE RISKS OF DEFUNDING:**

- Increases in hospitalizations and emergency visits.
- More missed school days, higher healthcare costs, and poorer asthma control.
- Worsened health outcomes, especially as Wisconsin faces climate-related challenges like rising temperatures and air pollution.

**THE NATIONAL ASTHMA CONTROL PROGRAM** is essential to Wisconsin's ability to manage asthma, improve quality of life, and save healthcare costs. Restoring and protecting NACP funding ensures people with asthma in Wisconsin—especially the most vulnerable—continue to receive the education, support, and services they need to breathe easier.