



MAYOR'S NEWS RELEASE

Tuesday, November 12, 2002

MAYOR ANNOUNCES \$413,807 GRANT TO HELP EDUCATE CHILDREN AND PARENTS DEALING WITH ASTHMA

Mayor Douglas H. Palmer today announced that the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has approved a grant of \$413,807 for a three-year asthma management and education program designed to support children and families who deal with the illness on a daily basis.

“Asthma disproportionately affects minority children, urban residents, and the poor,” Mayor Palmer said. “We had more than 600 visits to Capital Health Systems’ emergency rooms by children during 2001. We can change that.”

Data obtained from Capital Health System, Trenton’s largest pediatric department, reveal that, in addition to the 676 asthma-related visits to the emergency room, 212 children below age 18 were admitted to the hospital for asthma treatment during 2001. The numbers demonstrate the need for parents and children to be educated about asthma, for even though it is the most prevalent chronic childhood illness in the United States, it is manageable.

The citywide asthma program, Trenton Childhood Asthma Project (TCAP), is directed by Patricia Nelson-Johnson. TCAP will use the new grant funds to provide one-on-one in-home asthma education to children and families who have had an emergency room visit or hospitalization because of asthma.

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With the new grant under the Foundation's New Jersey Health Initiatives program, the Trenton Childhood Asthma Project will augment its work toward two important goals:

- **Reducing childhood asthma through the development of community partnerships**
- **Improving the ability of children and families to conduct asthma self-management in collaboration with their regular physician**

To support self-management, the project will teach families to identify the signs and symptoms of asthma, factors that can trigger an asthma episode, common medications used to treat asthma, and ways to correct those things within the home that can contribute to child asthma. The project also will organize the referral of participants through partnerships developed with area hospitals and local physicians.

"The success of TCAP will rely heavily upon the collaborations developed with the three local acute care hospital emergency departments in Trenton – Capital Health System at Mercer, Capital Health System at Fuld, and St. Francis Medical Center," Nelson-Johnson said.

In a 2001 survey of parents of first graders in public, nonpublic, and charter schools, Trenton found 25 percent of parents said their child had been diagnosed by a physician as having asthma, Nelson-Johnson noted. Yet Trenton public school data from 1999-2000 show less than 3 percent of elementary schoolchildren had asthma medication on record with the school nurse. "There is clearly a disparity between the rate of diagnosis and the consistent use of appropriate treatment in the Trenton school-age population," said Nelson-Johnson.

To increase access to community-based resources and to enhance the range of services for children, additional partnerships have been formed with Isles, Inc., the American Lung Association of NJ, and the Trenton Public Schools.

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Isles has a one-year U.S. Environmental Protection Agency grant to do environmental assessment in people's homes, Nelson-Johnson said, while the American Lung Association is making available its established education and facilitator training programs.

Using those materials, education and training programs will be conducted for Trenton school nurses by Clatie Campbell, Director of Respiratory Care Services for Capital Health Systems.

Ultimately, said Nelson-Johnson, the project will improve coordination of asthma treatment between providers, foster better management of asthma symptoms, and enhance the quality of life for children and families affected by this chronic disease.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, based in Princeton, NJ, is the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to health and health care. It concentrates its grant making in four goal areas: to assure that all Americans have access to basic health care at reasonable cost; to improve care and support for people with chronic health conditions; to promote healthy communities and lifestyles; and to reduce the personal, social and economic harm caused by substance abuse – tobacco, alcohol, and illicit drugs.

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