

## FACT SHEET

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### What is the Healthy Public Housing Initiative?

The Initiative is a *unique collaborative effort* that brings together the Boston Housing Authority, the Committee for Boston Public Housing and the West Broadway and Franklin Hill Tenant Task Forces, the Boston Public Health Commission, the Boston University and Harvard University Schools of Public Health and the Tufts University School of Medicine, and others to find effective ways to improve the health and housing conditions of Boston public housing residents. The project has received funding support from HUD, the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, the Boston Foundation and the Jessie B. Cox Charitable Trust. The BHA is also making significant contributions of staff and program commitments.

The Initiative is a response both to the *high prevalence of asthma* in low-income urban communities, and to the BHA's desire to make the most effective use of its modernization and energy conservation funds to meet the goals of providing safe and healthy housing. The project has potential for an enormous positive impact for the BHA, Boston's largest landlord, with over 14,000 units serving approximately 25,000 residents,

### What are the Project Benefits?

**For residents:** *Residents are involved* at every step of the process--working with university partners to assess initial conditions, determining the best mix of interventions to test, evaluating results, and developing action plans for BHA and others. Residents working with the project team receive training in indoor environmental health, surveying and testing techniques, as well as identifying appropriate health outreach programs. BHA provides support to enhance continued employment upon completion of the project.

**For the BHA:** The goal is to *provide the BHA with recommendations for best practices* for building and energy improvements as well as new maintenance standards and training focused on health and safety. By participating in this project, BHA serves as a model for ways to improve the health, safety and comfort of public housing residents that can be replicated nationally.

## What will the project do?

The project will *test the effectiveness of various interventions to improve residents' health.*

- *Individual Families and Units*—what health benefits result from action with individual families and units, including asthma-related interventions such as air filters, new mattresses, heavy-duty cleaning, integrated pest management, and family education on controlling asthma triggers and safe pest management strategies?
- *Energy-Related*—what health benefits result from the building systems upgrades and unit modifications planned in the BHA's energy modernization program?
- *Community Capacity and Social Assets*—what benefits result from residents' active involvement to improve their communities?

Once the interventions are in place, they will be evaluated for health improvements, resident response, cost effectiveness, ease of implementation and other factors. The project is designed to contribute economic information on the benefits and costs of maintaining healthy housing through reinvestments of energy savings, redirection of maintenance spending, and allocation of health funding resources to housing repair and upkeep.

Resident empowerment through health education and outreach will support their individual and collective actions on housing conditions that affect health. In addition, BHA maintenance and management staff will participate in new "housing and health" training programs that will complement resident activities.

## How is the Project Funded?

The Initiative currently has a four-year, multi-million project underway in three developments. The Healthy Public Housing Initiative has received major funding through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's *Healthy Homes Initiative* and from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation. In addition, the Initiative has received grants from the Cox Family Trusts and the Boston Foundation and in-kind contributions from Sharper Image and Simmons Mattress Company. BHA is providing program and in-kind support.