

Children's Wisconsin Community Health Asthma Management Program supports kids and families

Asthma is one of the most common chronic childhood conditions. About 1 in 15 Wisconsin children have asthma, and 40% report that it is not well managed, according to the 2026-2029 Wisconsin Asthma Plan. Asthma is a leading cause of missed school days, emergency department visits and hospitalizations.

Chronic disease was identified as a top priority through Children's Wisconsin's community health needs assessment, conducted in partnership with other area health systems. Children's Wisconsin is intentionally focusing on conditions, like asthma, that are most prevalent among kids. In 2023, Milwaukee County children ages 5-9 had the highest rate of emergency department visits for asthma (119.9 visits per 10,000 children) which is double the rate of their peers statewide (48.9 visits). In Milwaukee County and statewide, Black children have the highest rates of asthma-related emergency department visits (165.6 visits per 10,000 children). Addressing this disparity requires tackling environmental and structural factors, while providing kids and families with the individualized care they need.

The Children's Wisconsin Community Health Asthma Management Program (CHAMP) is an evidence-based home visiting program that helps Milwaukee County children covered by Medicaid better manage their asthma at no cost to families. Respiratory therapists meet with kids and families in their homes to discuss asthma symptoms, common household triggers, medication management and more. CHAMP is supported by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services Asthma-Safe Homes program and Children's Health Insurance Program, along with philanthropic support and Children's Wisconsin community benefit investment.

Clinicians, schools, and community organizations can refer families to CHAMP, or families can refer themselves. On average, CHAMP serves approximately 100 children in Milwaukee County annually. CHAMP participants report better asthma control scores and fewer urgent care and emergency department visits.

When CJ was younger, he had severe asthma that often flared up during normal play and physical activity. Despite multiple trips to the emergency department, his asthma remained uncontrolled and his symptoms kept returning. These frequent visits meant CJ was spending time away from school and his caregivers missed work to care for him. After CJ was referred to CHAMP, a respiratory therapist visited him and his caregiver at home to help identify asthma triggers, explain his medications and help them better manage his

asthma. With CHAMP support, CJ's asthma became well-controlled. He "graduated" from CHAMP and no longer needed services through Children's Asthma Plus Clinic, which supports kids with severe asthma.

Children's Wisconsin's CHAMP coordinators build trusting relationships with families, helping them stay engaged in the program and improve their child's health. By reducing barriers to care and addressing social and environmental conditions, CHAMP helps advance health equity for kids living with uncontrolled asthma.