

UNIVERSITIES SUPPORTING PUBLIC HEALTH & A HEALTHY ECONOMY

THE B.E.A.T. GOES ON: ASTHMA IN HEAD START CHILDREN

Three years ago, the University of Massachusetts Lowell Department of Nursing and the Center for Chronic Disease began a collaborative community asthma outreach project with Greater Lowell Head Start. Data collected found an asthma prevalence rate of 35% in 316 children who participated in asthma screening during the 1999-2000 academic year and a 22% prevalence rate in 246 children who participated during the 2000-2001 academic year. This prevalence rate is significantly higher than the approximate 7% national prevalence rate of pediatric asthma and the 14 to 19 percent ranges reported by previous Head Start projects done in Chicago, Wisconsin and Virginia. Atopy, exposure to passive smoke and environmental triggers were identified as significant asthma risk factors for this Head Start population. Other findings suggested poor disease control and lack of education related to asthma decision-making skills and self-management behaviors. B.E.A.T., **B**reathe **E**asier **A**sthma **T**raining is a home-based asthma assessment and education program that has been implemented to address this health need with Head Start children and their families. The goals of the B.E.A.T. Program are consistent with Healthy People 2010: increase the number of children and families who receive asthma education, reduce the number of days that children have asthma symptoms, reduce missed school days for children with asthma and reduce the number of emergency visits for children with asthma.