

## USING AN ASTHMA ACTION PLAN

### Statement of the Problem

To effectively manage asthma, a plan is needed to guide the client in making decisions around daily management of the disease and handling worsening asthma conditions.

For parents of children who have asthma it also serves as a necessary communication tool. Your provider keeps a copy and you are given two more copies one for yourself and one for others who assist child with their asthma when you cannot be there. This includes: school teachers, after-school care providers, child care center teachers/administrators, physical education teachers, and baby-sitters. It's important to keep your copy visible in your household. You may choose to put it up on the refrigerator or keep your Asthma Action Plan in a container with your child's asthma medications. Your child and other household members need to know where the designated spot is for the Asthma Action Plan and your child's medications.

“The Expert Panel recommends that clinicians provide to all patients who have asthma a written asthma action plan that includes instructions for (1) daily management and (2) recognizing and handling worsening asthma including adjustment of dose of medications. Written plans are particularly recommended for patients who have moderate or severe persistent asthma, a history of severe exacerbations, or poorly controlled asthma [Evidence B]” (Source: Expert Panel Report, pg. 115)

### Background

- The Asthma Action Plan is a tool to help you manage your asthma with greater confidence.
  - Once you are familiar with it, you won't need to refer to it every time. But it still should be reviewed at least once a year with your provider.
  - It helps you work with your health care provider in planning care for your asthma.
  - It provides a step-by-step plan of action that will help you remain calm and give you direction when your child's asthma worsens.
- The Asthma Action Plan can help to keep your asthma in good control.
- The Asthma Action Plan describes what regular medicines to use every day.
- The Asthma Action Plan includes actions to take when asthma symptoms or peak flows worsen, including what medicines to take and when to contact the health care provider or seek emergency care.
- The Asthma Action Plan can be used when seeking emergency care from a health care provider to let the provider know how your asthma is usually treated.

- Your health care provider should give you an Action Plan, and review it with you at least once a year to make sure it's up-to-date.

## ASSESSMENT

- Does the child have an Asthma Action Plan?
- **If YES**, then continue with this protocol.
- **If NO**, then encourage the child to request an asthma action plan from his/her provider. Once a plan is available, proceed with this protocol at next visit. (It is important to request an Asthma Action Plan from your child's provider, however if you have requested it and it has not been provided your Community Health Worker will provide you with a standard protocol Asthma Action Plan until you receive one from your child's provider.)
- Is the plan up-to-date (reviewed with the medical provider less than a year ago)?
- Where is it kept? Is it easily viewed and accessed?
- Review child's use of current Asthma Action Plan.
- Is the plan understood by the child? Review scenarios (see appendix) and see if the child knows what to do based on the action plan.
- How often does the child consult the plan?
- Are there any problems following the action plan? (Identify them, and write them down for your child's provider so that you can solve them with provider support and guidance. Remember your child can be a vocal participant for their asthma health care at provider visits.)
- When you used the plan was it helpful? Did you have problems following the action plan? (If so, ask for provider clarification.)

## Educational Messages

- An asthma action plan is a tool to help you manage asthma with confidence.
- It is important to know how to use it and to always refer to it when you are having asthma symptoms.
- It should be reviewed and updated at least once a year with the health care provider.
- Give a copy to anyone who cares for the child and teach them how and when to use it.
- Always take it and your medicines with you when you go to the clinic or the emergency room so the provider will know what your primary care provider has recommended.

## Actions

CHW ACTIONS	CAREGIVER/CHILD ACTIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review Action Plan with client and make sure it is understood.</li> <li>• Discuss using both symptoms and peak flow (if appropriate) to monitor asthma.</li> <li>• How to know when in yellow zone/red zone.</li> <li>• Make sure child's OWN early warning signs are included. Ask: "Is there anything you notice before you get asthma symptoms?"</li> <li>• Using the child's action plan, have the child practice recognizing what zone they are in and what they should do (see action plan scenarios in the appendix). If you don't know their peak flow measures, use symptoms. If child doesn't have an action plan yet, use a blank one for practice using symptoms to identify what zone she is in.</li> <li>• Encourage the child to consult the plan regularly and whenever symptoms or peak flow worsen. Help the child address barriers to use of plan.</li> <li>• Encourage the child to review the plan with the primary medical provider.</li> </ul> <p><b>CHW Actions for Child</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the action plan as a teaching tool. Involve both the child and the caregiver with discussing the action plan if the child is 8 years or older. Ask the child to be responsible for making the initial assessment of zone and figuring out the appropriate action. Younger children (8-10) should consult with an adult every time, but older children (11 and older) may be able to act on their own. These are approximate age ranges and depend on the capabilities of the child.</li> <li>• Make sure the child's other caretakers (child</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have an up-to-date Action Plan.</li> <li>• Review Action Plan with your main health care provider.</li> <li>• Keep the Action Plan where it is easy to see.</li> <li>• Refer to Action Plan for what medicines to use every day and what actions to take when asthma symptoms worsen.</li> <li>• Provide copies of Action Plan to others caring for you.</li> <li>• Keep peak flow/symptom diary if you find this useful and share it with your medical provider.</li> </ul>

care, school, relatives, coaches, etc.) have a copy.	
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**Follow-up Visits**

- See Action Plan Scenarios

**Supplies**

- Action Plan

**Education Handouts**

**Referrals**

**Appendix: Action Plan Scenarios**

Using the participant’s action plan, practice recognizing what zone the child is in and what he/she should do. If you don’t know his/her peak flow measures, use symptoms. Examples:

**1) Cindy has started coughing more often and her chest feels scratchy. Her peak flow is 260.**

- What zone is she in? (yellow)
- What should she do? (take two puffs of her rescue medicine)

She begins to feel better and her peak flow rises to 340. But then in four hours, her cough returns and his/her peak flow is back to 240 give her two more puffs.

- What should I do now? (take two more puffs of her rescue medicine now and repeat every 4-6 hours, double her dose of controller medicine [take twice as many puffs each scheduled time], and call her medical provider).

**2) Jose has been having more and more asthma symptoms over the past several days. He is now short of breath when he runs a little bit to catch the bus and is not sleeping well because of a cough. His peak flow is 160.**

- What zone is he in? (red)
- What should he do? (take two puffs of his rescue medicine now, repeat again in 20 minutes and again in another 20, call his medical provider right away, and call the Child's Consultation nurse if he can't reach his provider; if he starts feeling worse and hasn't gotten help over the phone, he should go to the emergency department or call 911).

**3) Darrick, whose asthma is usually well controlled, has been coughing last night. He checked his peak flow in the morning and it is 280.**

- What zone is he in? (Yellow)
- What should he do? (Take 2 puffs of rescue medicine.)

**He feels better and his cough goes away. He checks his peak flow later in the day and it is 350. His cough hasn't come back.**

- Now what should he do? (Take 2 puffs of his rescue medicine every 4-6 hours for the 1-2 days, take double the number of puffs in the morning and evening of his inhaled steroid preventive medicine for the next week, and call his medical provider.

## Using an Asthma Action Plan checklist

### KEY MESSAGES

- AAP is a tool to manage asthma with confidence.
- Know how to use it. Always look at it when symptoms occur.
- Review once/year with provider.
- Copies to all caregivers. Teach them how to use it.
- Take to ER with medicines.

### ASSESSMENT

- Does child have AAP?
- Is it up to date?
- Where is it kept?

- Review use:
- Is it understood?
- How often do you refer to it?
- Any problem following it?

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#### CHW ACTIONS

- Involve parent and child in discussion if child > 8 years old.
- If no AAP, encourage parent to ask provider for one.
- Make sure it's easy to find.
- Review AAP use:
- Use both symptoms and peak flow to monitor
- How to know yellow and red zone
- Child's own warning signs
- Encourage regular use. Address barriers to use.
- Copies to other caregivers needed?
- Remind client to review AAP with provider regularly