

## CLUTTER AND ASTHMA

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Clutter holds mass amounts of dust mites, pet dander, dust and is a perfect habitat for cockroaches. Dust holds toxic micro-substances from car fumes and other toxins from the outdoors. The presence of clutter makes it hard to clean the home and get rid of dust. The dust associated with clutter contains endotoxins that are substances shed by bacteria. Endotoxin in the home is related to higher rates of asthma. Toxins produced by the bacteria may trigger asthma symptoms whether the person suffers from asthma or allergies or not. Other factors such as how long and when a person is exposed to bacterial toxin as well as genetic factors may contribute to the development of asthma.

### BACKGROUND

Clutter contributes to poor air quality in the home. The more stuff in the home, the more surfaces and crevices for dust to accumulate in. According to the Environmental Protection Agency: "Indoor air pollution is America's Number One Environmental Health Concern. Fifty percent (50%) of all illness is caused by indoor air pollution." The American Lung Association states: "Indoor air pollution is wide spread. You are more likely to get sick from pollution in your home and office than from pollution in the air outside." This is because your home acts like a container that concentrates the pollution that is coming in from outside. You become bottled up inside your home with the toxins.

### ASSESSMENT

- Assess rooms in the home for clutter e.g. objects piled up on floors, furniture, flat surfaces, in bathroom shower stalls, and in damp areas such as basements.

### EDUCATIONAL MESSAGES

- Clutter creates conditions for the accumulation of triggers for the development of asthma and for asthma attacks.
- Clutter increases the amounts of dust and dust mites in the home. It also provides a perfect habitat for cockroaches. Clutter in the bathroom can increase the likelihood of mold and mildew due to water trapped beneath multiple shampoo and other bottles.
- Clutter in other areas of the home, can be prone to mold growth if there are unaddressed humidity and condensation issues in the home.
- Reducing clutter in the home is an important part of reducing asthma triggers and improving air quality.

### ACTIONS

CHW ACTIONS	PARTICIPANT ACTIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss the reasons for eliminating clutter</li> <li>• Suggest ways to reduce clutter: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sort it out putting stuff in separate piles e.g. clothes, shoes, etc. Separate those items that are no longer used and decide how to dispose of them.</li> <li>▪ Find a home for items that are still used e.g. videos by the VCR, shoes &amp; clothes arranged in closets. Store items in the room in which they are to be used.</li> <li>▪ Cover items by putting them in drawers, closets, or plastic containers with tightly fitting lids to minimize dust collection and reduce risk of cockroach invasion. Label boxes/bins with contents.</li> <li>▪ Do not store newspapers in the home. Put them in a recycle bin.</li> <li>▪ Discard unused corrugated cardboard immediately. The crevices are ideal habitats for cockroaches.</li> <li>▪ Clear exterior clutter from around the house, it is perfect habitat for mice and rats.</li> <li>▪ Make a plan to return items to their proper storage place after use.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take action to eliminate clutter in the home.</li> </ul>

## FOLLOW-UP VISITS

## SUPPLIES

## EDUCATION HANDOUTS

## REFERRALS

- Chore Services for volunteer support (i.e. Catholic Community Services)