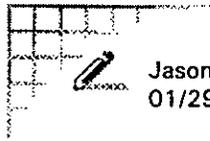


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**Health - Asthma**



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Subject: First Lady Hillary Clinton Unveils New, \$68 Million Initiative to Fight Asthma

**FIRST LADY HILLARY CLINTON UNVEILS NEW, \$68 MILLION INITIATIVE TO  
FIGHT ASTHMA  
January 28, 1999**

Today, First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton unveiled a new, \$68 million initiative to fight childhood asthma through a comprehensive national strategy that includes new efforts to: (1) implement school based programs that teach children how to effectively manage their asthma; (2) invest in research to determine environmental causes of asthma and to develop new strategies to reduce children's exposure to asthma triggers; (3) provide funds to states and providers to help them implement effective disease management strategies that will insure we lower hospitalizations, emergency room visits and deaths from asthma; and (4) conduct a new public information campaign to reduce exposure to asthma triggers and dust mites.

**MILLIONS OF CHILDREN SUFFER FROM ASTHMA**

Over the past 15 years, the number of children afflicted with asthma has doubled to total about 6 million. The most rapid increase in prevalence over this time period has occurred in children under the age of 5, with rates increasing over 160 percent. Over 100,000 children are hospitalized each year because of asthma, making it the leading cause of hospitalization due to chronic illness for children at a cost of \$1.9 billion in medical expenses annually. Asthma is also one of the leading causes of school absenteeism, resulting in over 10 million missed school days each year. Minority children are disproportionately affected by asthma. Although African American children under the age of 18 have only a slightly higher risk of actually having asthma than non-Hispanic white children, they experience a disproportionately higher rate of death from asthma attacks, over four times the rate for white children. Many children with asthma remain chronically impaired because they lack support systems that enable them to effectively manage their own disease or access sufficient medications or equipment.

**DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW NATIONAL STRATEGY**

Today, the First Lady will release "Asthma and the Environment: A Strategy to Protect Children," authored by the Children's Environmental Task Force on Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks to Children, which is co-chaired by the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Health and Human Services. This report outlines the first-ever comprehensive, Administration-wide strategy to fight childhood asthma. The Task Force

makes four recommendations for asthma that will reduce the incidents of asthma in children, as well as hospitalizations, and emergency room visits for asthma. The four steps for federal action are: strengthening and accelerating research efforts to better understand the environmental factors that exacerbate childhood asthma, expanding school based programs that reduce environmental exposures to asthma, collecting better data at the local level to track asthma incidents, and educating health care providers serving low income children about the most effective course of treatment for asthma.

**LARGEST EVER FEDERAL INVESTMENT TO FIGHT CHILDHOOD ASTHMA**

Today, the First Lady announced a new \$68 million initiative to address asthma. This package of investments responds to Task Force recommendations and includes:

**-more-**

**IMPLEMENTING SCHOOL-BASED ASTHMA PROGRAMS.** The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), together with the Department of Education, will invest \$8.4 million to expand school-based programs that teach parents and children how to identify and avoid allergens that trigger an asthma attack, as well as why it is important to use their asthma medication and their inhalers. EPA will also expand programs that educate teachers and school staff to help them eliminate potential triggers from the school environment. With this investment, over 2 million children will be able to breathe easier in their classrooms.

**INVESTING IN NEW RESEARCH TO REDUCE CHILDREN'S EXPOSURE TO ASTHMA TRIGGERS.** The Environmental Protection Agency will invest \$2 million to expand its research into the role that environmental hazards (including chemicals, particles, ozone, diesel exhaust, pesticides, tobacco smoke and allergens) play in the onset of childhood asthma. The Environmental Protection Agency will also invest \$1 million to conduct a pilot program to expand air pollution monitoring in up to two communities downwind of industrialized urban centers to better understand the relationship between air pollution and asthma. These new investments builds on the Administration's long-standing commitment to asthma research. This year, the National Institutes of Health will invest over \$110 million dollars in research to explore the cause of asthma and develop strategies to better manage the disease, and plans to continue this significant investment in FY2000.

**IMPLEMENTING NEW DISEASE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES TO TARGET LOW INCOME CHILDREN.** The Department of Health and Human Services will provide \$50 million in competitive grant funds to States who identify and treat asthmatic children enrolled in the Medicaid program in accordance with the new disease management guidelines developed by the National Institutes of Health. These guidelines will help to ensure that children receive the appropriate medication and are taught how to effectively manage their illness. Through this initiative, participating states will collect data on asthma incidents so we can better understand asthma and effects. In addition, HHS will invest almost \$2 million to work with State officials and other providers nationwide to help them integrate these new strategies into their current patterns of practice.

**CREATING A NEW NATIONAL PUBLIC INFORMATION CAMPAIGN.** The Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Health and Human Services will invest \$5.2 million in a national public information campaign to reduce children's exposure to environmental tobacco smoke and other indoor asthma triggers through a national public service campaign that uses posters, flyers, and brochures that identify common asthma triggers, such as pet hair or tobacco smoke, and simple solutions for eliminating or avoiding them; expands existing in-home education networks, such as community based lead prevention programs, and utilizes Americorps and VISTA volunteers to provide direct assistance to parents in identifying asthma triggers and implementing intervention strategies; and using health care providers and managed care organizations to help parents reduce their children's exposure to asthma triggers.