

# WHY SHOULD SCHOOLS CARE ABOUT ASTHMA?

**Asthma is not just a health issue, it's an education issue.**

**Asthma is the chronic disease that causes the most school absenteeism.<sup>1</sup>**

- Children suffer from high rates of asthma in **Massachusetts** (14% in Boston)<sup>2</sup>
- Children who aren't in school **can't learn**

**Poor Indoor Air Quality doesn't just affect students:**

- It can cause **chronic respiratory problems** and **reduce school staff's ability** to perform mental tasks requiring concentration, calculation or memory
- Teachers and custodians have high rates of work-related asthma<sup>3</sup>

**Healthy, high performing schools = healthy, high performing students**

*Adapted by Health Resources in Action from the MA Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health's Healthy Schools Initiative*

Sources: <sup>1</sup>Healthy Schools, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/asthma/index.htm>

<sup>2</sup>Pediatric Asthma in Massachusetts 2008-2009, MA Department of Public Health, Bureau of Environmental Health <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dph/environmental/tracking/asthma-08-09.pdf>

<sup>3</sup>Occupational Lung Disease Bulletin, MA Department of Public Health Occupational Health Surveillance Program <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dph/occupational-health/sensor-lung-disease-bulletins/august2010.pdf>

# FACILITIES and CUSTODIAL STAFF:

**You can make an enormous impact on the health and well-being of students with asthma.**

## Did you know?

- Asthma is often a cause of student absenteeism
- Many things in the school building can cause a child to have an asthma attack:
  - Pests, like mice and roaches
  - Pesticides
  - Dust, often from clutter
  - Bleach and disinfecting products
  - Other scented cleaning products

**We know** that you know the school building inside and out.

Create a healthier learning environment by:

- Participating in the school wellness committees
- Educate teachers, administrators and other staff about safe pest management and the IPM log
- Advocate for increased funding so you can make needed repairs