

SOPHE Resolution on Reducing the Impact of Asthma

**Adopted by the SOPHE Board of Trustees
10/19/01**

Whereas the Society for Public Health Education (SOPHE) acknowledges that asthma is a serious, chronic respiratory disease that affects an estimated 15 million individuals, including an estimated 4.4 million children in the United States^{1,2}; and

Whereas in the last 15 years, the prevalence of asthma increased 75% overall, by 74% among those between the ages of 5 and 14, and by 160% among pre-school children^{1,2}; and

Whereas nearly 1 in 13 school-aged children has asthma, which is the leading cause of school absences for a chronic illness and accounting for over 10 million missed school days per year^{3,4}; and

Whereas asthma causes over 10 million doctor visits each year⁴, 1.5 million emergency room visits each year, with over 500,000 hospitalizations^{1,5}; and

Whereas, the impact of asthma falls disproportionately on African-American and certain Hispanic populations and appears to be particularly severe in urban inner cities, with these populations experiencing significantly higher rates of fatalities, hospital admissions, and emergency room visits due to the disease^{1,6}; and

Whereas the financial and human burden of asthma is enormous with the estimated annual cost of the disease in 2000 at 12.7 *billion* dollars⁷;

Whereas more than 5,000 Americans die unnecessarily from asthma each year^{1,2}; and

Whereas death and disability from asthma is almost always preventable through education about the correct diagnosis, management and treatment of the disease⁶; and

Whereas Healthy People 2010 Objectives for the Nation cites the need to reduce deaths, hospitalizations, and emergency room visits due to asthma; calls for reducing activity limitations and missed days from school and work among those with asthma; and calls for increasing the proportion of persons with asthma receiving formal patient education as an essential part of the self-management, treatment and control of their condition⁶; and

Whereas SOPHE can play a critical role in helping to reduce the burden of asthma through its network of trained health educators who are important resources in raising public awareness and in helping manage and control the disease.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That SOPHE

1. Urge the Administration and Congress to increase funding for programs at the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Environmental Protection Agency, and other agencies that address the prevention, self-management and treatment of asthma.
2. Support public policies that increase funding opportunities for recruiting and training public health educators and other health care professionals from under represented groups to deal with the problem of asthma.

3. Urge planners of the 5th Advocacy Summit and the Friends of School Health Coalition that legislation related to asthma be included as a priority topic for 2002.
4. Seek funding and support for professional training opportunities on asthma for public health education and health care professionals, and at a minimum, offer asthma-related sessions at the SOPHE 2002 Midyear Meeting.
5. Actively participate, along with SOPHE chapters, in coalitions at the national and local levels to educate the public about asthma prevention and treatment through National Health Education Week and other community-based activities.
6. Send a copy of this resolution to each member of the Coalition of National Health Education Organizations (CNHEO), encouraging them to take a proactive role in conducting asthma education activities and supporting legislation to increase appropriations for asthma prevention, self-management and treatment.
7. Publish a special asthma-related insert in a future issue of “News & Views” highlighting the importance of partnering with organizational and individual stakeholders.
8. Promote the role of trained public health educators in raising public awareness of asthma and in helping self-manage, treat and control the disease.
9. Promote health insurance and pharmaceutical companies and other agencies to include formalized asthma education as part of the comprehensive care management continuum.

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REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

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