

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem Solving Model
Topic: Asthma

Element 1: Issue Identification, Community Vision, and Strategic Goal Setting.

- Pollution triggers (secondhand smoke, auto exhaust)
- Poor indoor air quality (radon, mold)
- Chemicals in home (household cleaners, air fresheners)
- Pests (cockroaches, dust mites)
- Medication costs
- Access to health care

After identifying issues, prioritize what is most important. Community groups should decide on who needs to meet, when, and where.

- Churches, schools, community centers are some good locations.
- Ideas to encourage attendance – provide food, make it a potluck, ensure meeting accessibility, advertise, offer childcare / make it child friendly.
- How to advertise – flyers, texting, church bulletins, network with neighbors, begin conversations about the issue.

Goals & Envision Solutions: Create the community group. Create a plan of action and plan how to implement it. Agree on logistics (like meeting days, how to raise funds).

Element 2: Community Capacity-Building and Leadership Development

So far we have formed our community group. Now we will pick one issue to focus on: **pollution triggers**.

List of information needs: Local data on asthma in schools, fact sheets, workshops, community surveys, organizations that are addressing pollution/asthma. The fact sheets and workshops must be community friendly – make sure there are no language barriers and use interpreters when needed.

Support needed: Funding experts (CDC, EPA, health departments), and community buy-in. Leaders (possibly local political leaders). Need spaces to meet (especially healthy, neutral spaces).

Technical assistance needed: Look for local experts in the community, and build in ways to make strong connections with community members and find out what their skills and expertise areas are. Decide who your resources might be based on what your needs are.

Element 3: Consensus Building and Dispute Resolution

What conflicts or disagreements has the community experienced?

- ➔ Differences in behaviors and values. Disagreements. Can be very evident or low-level.

What actions should be taken to resolve the conflicts or disagreements?

- ➔ Finding common ground, compassion.

Community Forum Session: Initiating Action

Facilitated by: Tami Thomas-Burton and John Steward

What challenges do you anticipate encountering before you arrive consensus and agreement?

→ Will always find that more data and more time for discussion are needed.

What actions can you take to create consensus?

→ Look for win-win solutions. Reiterate ground rules.

Element 4: Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships and Leveraging of Resources

Identify potential stakeholders/partners:

- EPA. Federal government. Role: Technical assistance.
- ATL HEAL. 501 c(3). Role: Research & educational trainings.
- Food Commons. 501 c(3). Role: Research & access.
- Women Watch Africa. 501 c(3) Role: Provide culturally appropriate education to refugees on asthma prevention.
- Clean Air Campaign.
- American Lung Association.
- Department of Natural Resources.
- Environmental Information Association.
- Grady Hospital.
- Pro-Bono Partnership of Atlanta.

Element 5: Constructive Engagement by Relevant Stakeholders

You are “Developing your Ask” from specific stakeholders or for specific resources. Communities often don’t know how to ask for help – such as how to phrase their questions or specifics they should include. It’s important to have pertinent information ready so when you talk to your stakeholders you have to know what you’re talking about and present the information well. Know numbers – community demographics, how many children have asthma, etc. Develop a brief “elevator speech” for when you are talking to stakeholders and can’t talk for long.

Element 6: Sound Management and Implementation

Develop a work plan – action plan. Establish actions, create a timeline, identify leadership, assign tasks, document outcomes, celebrate successes.

If you do not attach a date to your plan it is just a wish, not a plan. You must have dates to create accountability. Ex. “call EPA by the next community meeting date and come to the meeting with a report”.

Element 7: Evaluation, Lessons Learned, and Replication of Best Practices

Evaluation helps determine whether a program is achieving its goals.

What are the measures of success? List the evaluation techniques you will use.

- Determination of best practices.
- Data – i.e. showing the % increase in community awareness of asthma triggers.

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Call your university – students love to perform evaluations of community programs. And they'll do it for free. Try to recruit them early on so they can make a plan to track indicators.

Celebrate!

Closing & determination of action steps that we can take:

- Action step: Distribute the kit.
- Action step: Apply for grants.
- Action step: Present at next meeting.
- Action step: Community investigation/community assessment.
- Action step: Review information (i.e. EPA informational webpages).
- Action step: Use the elements.
- Action step: Call a university.
- Action step: Start to identify partners.
- Action step: Increase your personal awareness of the issue.