

Conference Poster Abstract

A Central Georgia asthma prevalence assessment of school-age children and compliance with Senate Bill 472

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Background: A common theme among the counties of the North Central Health District is the disparity between the number of asthma-related visits of African-American and white children ages 1-14 to the emergency department. In 2013, 858 children ages 1-14 in the district had emergency room visits related to asthma. The purpose of this study was to assess North Central Health District (NCHD) schools to determine the prevalence of self-reported asthma by parents and school age children and the adequacy of students' access to maintenance inhalers at school, and to identify schools that qualify for Asthma Friendly School Recognition.

Methods: The "Asthma School Policy Assessment" from the 2015 Georgia Asthma-Friendly Schools Toolkit and Recognition Guidance was used to assess policies and practices for addressing asthma with school staff, parents, and children within the NCHD schools. The Lead School Nurses in each of the 13 counties were contacted in the fall of 2015 via email to request their participation in the assessment. Each was sent a link via email to complete the consent and assessment online; Lead Nurses then sent the link to their team nurses. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. IRB approval was obtained from Mercer University.

Results: The findings from the study indicate that 75% of the reporting schools have asthmatic students enrolled. The number of students with asthma ranged from 5 to 79 per school. However, only two reporting schools could identify a medication policy that allows children to possess and self-administer asthma medication. Furthermore, none of the schools reported having all five policies necessary to obtain Asthma Friendly School recognition.

Conclusions: The results indicate a need for school health nurse training to ensure schools implement and adhere to policies to reduce asthma disparities among school age children as outlined in the 2015 Georgia Asthma-Friendly Schools Toolkit and Recognition Guidance.

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