

Making Health a Consideration for Key Housing Decisions – Leveraging Opportunity Points

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH WATCH

Centers for Disease Control – Building Strategic Alliances for Healthy Housing

Abstract

In Cleveland and its first ring suburbs, endemic poverty, old and substandard housing, distressed neighborhoods, and widespread foreclosures combine to put hundreds of thousands of residents, particularly the most vulnerable (children, elderly and people with chronic illnesses) at risk from housing-related health hazards.

In response to these challenges, a core group of organizations has participated in considerable healthy house and related data gathering, field research, demonstration, policy development, education, training and advocacy in Cleveland/Cuyahoga County since the mid-1990s. Environmental Health Watch has been an important partner in nearly all of these efforts. Building upon these achievements, our overall strategy is to develop a healthy house strategic alliance that brings together key organizations in the health, housing and associated sectors – many of which have a strong history of working together – with a broad range of additional stakeholders, to create and implement a healthy housing plan. Our overall goal is to institutionalize healthy house-related considerations in the wide range of housing decisions and actions throughout the house life-cycle, with the long term impact of reducing housing-related hazards and their associated disease and injury. Our concept of “healthy house” is broadly construed to encompass health, safety, accessibility, affordability (including utility costs), environmental impact (e.g., contribution to local and climate change-related air pollution), in a sustainable and health-promoting community.

The Cleveland/Cuyahoga County healthy house strategic alliance will engage a variety of stakeholders, through various levels and modes of involvement, to work together to accomplish the following objectives:

1. Consolidate the previous healthy house-related work in the region by compiling, analyzing, and synthesizing the collected data.
2. Assess housing-related health hazards and create local best practice preventive and remediation recommendations, taking into account national guidelines and evidence-based interventions
3. Identify points in the range of housing decisions and actions that provide an opportunity to introduce healthy house-related considerations.
4. Determine the key organizations, legal structures, guidelines, educational material, codes, and other elements that are operative at those opportunity points.
5. Determine the healthy housing-related actions appropriate for those opportunity points and the considerations for their selection.
6. Develop criteria for selecting the significant opportunity points with the greatest leverage for including healthy housing considerations in standard practices.
7. Develop a plan and strategy focused on the priority opportunity points, starting with pilot activities. Define implementation steps, timeline, costs, responsibilities, and evaluation plan.



www.ehw.org
216-961-4646

