

## **Common Barriers to Asthma Management Encountered by LBACA Community Health Workers**

### **Provider Care**

- Patients intimidated by providers and staff. Patients are intimidated to approach staff with questions.
- Patients are aware of time pressures faced by providers, and “don’t want to bother the doctor” with comments and questions
- Interpreters are not always available during patient visits and families are concerned that message is not being interpreted properly
- Lack of awareness of patient literacy levels and educational levels.
- Providers do not complete and explain Asthma Action Plans
- Patients do not understand or do not receive provider medication and gadget use instructions
- Providers do not ask about patients’ understanding of medication and gadget use or any barriers to use such as fear, money, insurance, filling the prescription, etc.

### **Medication/Treatment**

- Very real fear of steroids
- Confusion over the use of Controller medications-some are told to use for only two weeks and some are told to finish the medication but are not instructed to make a follow up appointment.
- Families do not understand instructions on the medication containers.
- Parents do not know what side effects may occur or how to respond to the side effects. Some parents just stop administering the medication.
- Children are being told to use Albuterol daily
- Many children are being prescribed asthma medications but the provider is not diagnosing the child with asthma, leaving parents confused.
- Families are frustrated at the lack of continuity in seeing the same provider. Families see different providers and have to give child’s asthma history at every visit.
- Much confusion over spacers: providers are prescribing the inappropriate spacer for children (with mask or without mask) or are not prescribing spacers.
- Children are being prescribed cough syrup but are not given an explanation of why.
- Some families share medication among their children and family members with asthma
- Use of home remedies such as garlic water, cilantro tea, chamomile tea, injections from Mexico, etc., sometimes in place of prescribed medication.

## Home Environment

- Families served by LBACA are poor. Long Beach ranks 7<sup>th</sup> among cities in the US for the percent of its population living below the poverty level.
- Poverty, the affordable housing crisis and issues related to immigration status, place our families in a very vulnerable position. There is no place to go when their landlord refuses to make repairs that will help eliminate an asthma trigger or other health hazard in the home. Many are too fearful of complaining about conditions in their apartments for fear that their landlords will ask them to leave or will raise their rent. **Inspectors report that evictions following complaints are a routine practice.**
- Families live in very overcrowded conditions.

## Social Issues

- Many families have more pressing issue to deal with and are unable to make asthma management a top priority (death in the family, severe economic stress, unemployment, other sick children and family members, mental health issues, etc.)
- CHWs are encountering many depressed and completely overwhelmed mothers
- Social stigma prevents families from acknowledging and seeking treatment for mental health and other issues
- Extended family and friend support does not exist as it does in their native country
- Reluctant to acknowledge social or domestic problems for fear authorities will be notified and the children will be removed from the home by social services.
- Economic stress greatly limits the time, energy and money they have to devote to health issues