

Cleaning for Health Program Description

Cleaning for Health is an educational and technical assistance program designed to help schools transition to the new generation of safer cleaning chemicals and to adopt state-of-the-art cleaning practices.

The initial workshop presents an overview of the reasons behind implementing “green” cleaning, components of a Cleaning for Health program, and action steps to make the switch. This should be presented to a facility stakeholder group consisting of the superintendent, principals, nurses, custodians and other interested parties.

Technical assistance begins with a Cleaning Products and Practices Evaluation.

The Evaluation consists of:

- meeting with your custodian/facilities manager to discuss cleaning products and practices
- taking an inventory of the current cleaning products and practices
- conducting research to determine the level of toxicity of ingredients in current products
- generating a report based on our findings
- presenting the report to the facility’s Environmental Health and Safety Committee/Wellness Committee, or lacking one, an administrator, the school nurse and the facilities manager/head custodian

During this review, we will make recommendations to improve your school’s Indoor Air Quality and Environmental Health in cost-effective ways. We will introduce the Cleaning for Health program which assists schools in making technical changes to achieve long-term improvements to Indoor Air Quality and Environmental Health. We will also be happy to answer any questions you have at that time or that occur to you later on.

Importance of a Cleaning for Health program

20% of the US population occupies elementary and secondary schools. In 1999, the US Department of Education rated the IAQ in 1 of about 5 public schools as unsatisfactory. Indoor concentrations of pollutants are commonly 3 to 5 times higher than outdoor concentrations.

We have an asthma epidemic in this country, with 30 million people suffering from asthma, including 9 million children under the age of 18. NE has one of the highest rates of asthma as a region. Current rates in the NE states are:

- CT – 8.7% of children, 9.7% adults
- NH – 8% of children, 10.3% of adults
- ME – 10.7% of children, 9.6% of adults
- VT – 8.1% of children, 8.5% of adults

1 out of every 13 school-age children has asthma. Childhood deaths due to asthma have tripled in the past 15 years. 1 in 20 children was hospitalized overnight for asthma. Asthma is the primary cause of missed school days, over 1 million per year. Asthma costs society \$16 billion per year in medical and indirect costs.

The Cleaning for Health program was developed to reduce asthma triggers and other health effects from institutional cleaning. Ingredients in common cleaning products have been directly linked to asthma, with custodians experiencing one of the highest rates of occupational asthma. Other health problems linked to cleaning products are:

- Chronic respiratory illnesses
- Sick Building Syndrome
- Building-related symptoms
- Allergies and sensitivities

Research has also shown that contacts with chemicals at certain times in a child's development can affect learning, developmental and behavioral disabilities, which affect an estimated 17% of children.

The Cleaning for Health program consists of:

- less-toxic cleaning products, third party certified as environmentally preferable
- high filtration cleaning equipment
- best practices

A study at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center found that after a Cleaning for Health program was implemented the following improvements were seen:

- reduced airborne dust by 52%
- reduced VOCs by 49%
- reduced bacteria by 40%

Another deep cleaning program in a day care center found:

- reduced total illnesses by 24%
- reduced number of doctor visits by 34%
- reduced number of days absent by 46%

Join the Green Cleaning Revolution! Call today to join schools across the nation in protecting our students and staff from the health effects of toxic ingredients in cleaning products.

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