

Healthy Homes, Healthy Children

All children deserve to live in safe and healthy homes where they can thrive. Yet, [HUD estimates that over 30 million families live in homes considered unsafe](#) for reasons including poor plumbing, gas leaks, poor heating, lead-based paint hazards, and other structural and environmental hazards. These home exposures can lead to adverse impacts on children’s health and development, and on the well-being of their families. For instance, [at least 535,000 and as many as 1.2 million](#) children in the United States (US) have elevated blood lead (EBL) levels, and lead in children’s homes remains the primary source of exposure. The [CDC states that there is no safe level of lead exposure](#). For children with EBLs, the cognitive, behavioral, and physical health [impacts can be devastating](#) and irreversible.

Home environments can also be problematic for children with respiratory problems. Over 7 million children in the US have asthma; and many of the most serious triggers of the illness (mold, dust mites, smoke, pests, and chemical irritants) can be found in the home environment. These exposures can lead to more serious and frequent [asthma symptoms and attacks](#). Asthma is one of the leading causes of school absenteeism and the third leading cause of hospitalization of children under the age of 15; additionally, asthma-related health care costs total over \$50 billion annually.

Just as we know about the dangerous health effects of unhealthy housing, so too do we know that these effects disproportionately impact communities of color and low-income families. [Housing inequity](#) disproportionately exposes black communities to environmental pollutants, and people of color are less likely to have access to adequate health services. There is no doubt that as a result, [the scourge of unhealthy housing conditions continues to effect in particular the futures of children of color](#). While lead poisoning, asthma triggers, and other health hazards do not discriminate, the continued disparities in resources and treatment in the United States means that the effects of unhealthy housing are not evenly felt – and our responses to this challenge must acknowledge this reality.

All homes should employ [eight key elements](#) to ensure the health and well-being of its inhabitants. A healthy home should be dry, clean, safe, well-ventilated, pest-free, contaminant-free, well-maintained, and energy-efficient. Together, the eight elements of a healthy home comprise the essentials of a healthy housing unit and support the well-being of all individuals living in the home. For more information on each of the elements and how to ensure that your home is safe and healthy, please visit The Green & Healthy Home Initiative’s [website](#).

The Green & Healthy Homes Initiative

The Green & Healthy Homes Initiative (GHHI) is a non-profit organization dedicated to breaking the link between unhealthy housing and unhealthy families. Their approach is simple: to look at housing issues holistically from the perspective of what must be done to keep a family safe, rather than what can be done by each individual housing program given funding and programmatic constraints.

GHHI replaces standalone fixes with whole-home, integrated interventions by “braiding” funding from philanthropic and private sources as well as federal, state, and local governments to most effectively address the needs of individuals and families living in unhealthy housing. GHHI continues to effectively



implement this model in our flagship [Baltimore, MD location](#), and currently provides [technical assistance to over 30 partner cities and states](#) across the US. Since GHHI's founding, they have intervened in over 4,000 properties across Maryland, and have provided countless other services including trainings, legal assistance, and case management to those impacted by unhealthy housing conditions. Finally, GHHI remains a policy leader across the country, pushing for innovative funding and intervention strategies in all 50 states. Yet, despite the achievements and the progress made, we know there is much more to do to fully achieve our mission.

Please return to the CEH Movement's [Act Now](#) page to learn about simple ways you can take action to help!