

Using Concept Mapping to Explore and Engage Parent and Youth Residents of an Economically Underserved Minority Community around Children's Asthma

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COMMUNITY/POLICY BRIEF

What Is the Purpose of the Study?

Our study engages residents of an economically underserved, minority community around the issue of children's asthma to understand the specific triggers and issues of care facing parents and youth in this community, which is a necessary first step in designing a community-based intervention.

What Is the Problem?

Economically underserved and minority communities continue to shoulder a higher than average burden of asthma among children, where asthma is more likely to go uncontrolled. Thus, it is important to design interventions that target these communities to help reduce racial disparities in children's asthma. For these interventions to be effective, we need to tailor the intervention to the community, and specifically to children with asthma and their caregivers.

What Are the Findings?

Our study finds that there are several themes that are important around the triggers and care of asthma for residents of this economically underserved and minority community, some of which differ for adults and youth.

- *Asthma triggers.* For all residents in the sample, in addition to the more common triggers of asthma that include irritants in the home and community as well as allergies, violence is also important for triggering asthma among children within this community. Not only can violence can trigger asthma by creating fear, but also when children experience bad memories about a violent incident or when a family member died.
 - Youth ranked emotions and stress related to school more highly than adults as a trigger for asthma.
 - Adults were more concerned about trouble with access to care or medicine.
- *Asthma Care.* With respect to the care of asthma, medical and other relievers were ranked most as most important by both youth and adults.
 - Youth ranked supports who help to care for asthma, such as having friends with asthma or music to calm down, more highly in comparison to adults.
 - Adults were more focused on appliances to help with asthma than youth.

Who Should Care the Most?

The findings of our study are important for all caregivers of children in an underserved community who are more likely to come in contact with children who have asthma. These include community organizations, schools and school nurses, coaches of sports teams, afterschool program coordinators, and daycare providers, as well as those who have children with asthma living in their homes. These findings are also of importance to public health and social work practitioners who are aiming to reduce racial disparities in children's asthma by targeting communities who shoulder the highest burden.

Recommendations for Action

These data can be used to tailor interventions for children with asthma in this community, and to focus on different issues for children with asthma and their caregivers.

- *Youth*
 - Focus on dealing with emotions and past trauma associated with violence and/or death that can precipitate asthma attacks.
 - Focus on building support networks among youth with asthma, either through school or other after-school / community-based organizations.
- *Adult Caregivers*
 - Focus on issues related to the care of asthma, specifically the use of medicine and appliances.
 - Make parents aware of the emotional triggers of asthma and address inconsistencies in local asthma knowledge.

Future research also needs to assess whether the issues facing children with asthma and their caregivers in this community are also issues common in other communities, and whether interventions that are aimed at these issues are effective.