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Excellus BCBS Helps Lung Association Create More "Asthma-Friendly" Child Care Centers

Rochester, NY – More local children are being cared for in "asthma-friendly" child care centers, thanks to a grant from Excellus BlueCross BlueShield.

The Excellus BCBS grant enabled the Lung Association to expand its Asthma Friendly Childcare Initiative in the Greater Rochester area and surrounding counties. For a child care center to be considered "asthma friendly," providers must undergo Asthma 101 training, which teaches them about asthma and how to best care for children afflicted with the disease.

The Asthma Friendly Childcare Initiative trained more than 200 child care providers in four counties in 2012. The initiative, paid for by a \$2,500 Excellus BCBS grant, worked with Child Care Council Inc., which serves Monroe, Livingston and Wayne counties, as well as Head Start of Wayne County and the Steuben Child Care Project

"Young children typically can't tell their parents or child care providers that their chest is tight, or that they're suffering from other asthma symptoms," said Martin Lustick, M.D., a pediatrician and corporate medical director, Excellus BCBS. "Child care providers need to know how to create environments free of asthma triggers, such as mold and irritants, and learn to identify the signs that a child is having difficulty breathing."

Providers who attended the training sessions learned about ways to keep their day care environment free of common irritants that can trigger asthma flare ups. They also learned specifically about the types of cleaning solutions most likely to prompt episodes and the best ways to treat asthma attacks. The providers who participated in the program are overwhelmingly positive about their learning experience, and eager to incorporate the asthma friendly recommendations into their existing childcare programs.

"I've had children with asthma in my day care and thought I knew all about it, but the class gave me so much more," said Rosa Cortez, Owner of Rosa Cortez Family Child Care in Monroe County who completed the training and whose center earned the Asthma Friendly Child Care Endorsement. "I've learned so much and feel the children are safer here now."

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Nationwide, about one in 10 children suffers from asthma, according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

According to the Lung Association, asthma can be difficult to accurately diagnose in young children even though most children with the disease develop symptoms before they reach five years of age. As a result, children ages four and younger who suffer from asthma are more likely to suffer flare ups from the disease that require treatment in an emergency room.

"Thanks to the Excellus BCBS grant, more daycare providers are knowledgeable about the signs and symptoms of asthma and how best to intervene should a flare up occur," said Jeff Seyler, President and CEO of the American

Lung Association of the Northeast. "We are confident that this will mean healthier children and fewer children suffering from the severe asthma attacks that require treatment in the emergency room."

Child care providers interested in learning more about the Asthma Friendly Childcare Initiative may contact Cindy Trubisky, Senior Director of Community Asthma Education at the American Lung Association of the Northeast at (585) 666-1393 or ctrubisky@LungNE.org.

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The American Lung Association of the Northeast serves CT, MA, ME, NH, NY, RI and VT. We are part of the American Lung Association, the oldest voluntary health organization in the U.S. Established in 1904 to combat tuberculosis; our mission today is to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease. The focus is on air quality, asthma, tobacco control, and all lung disease. www.LungNE.org

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