



National Safe and Healthy Housing Coalition

Greetings,

PROVISIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE

- Alliance for Healthy Homes
- American Public Health Association
- American Society of Home Inspectors
- Association of State/Territories Health Officials
- Children's Health Forum
- Enterprise Community Partners
- Home Safety Council
- National Association of Realtors®
- National Center for Healthy Housing, Chair
- National Low Income Housing Coalition
- NeighborWorks America
- Rebuilding Together
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Commission to Build a Healthier America
- Sustainable Community Development
- U.S. Green Building Council

We invite you to join our collaborative efforts to create safer and healthier homes, especially for low-income families, throughout the U. S. through education and outreach to key national stakeholders and federal public decision-makers.

We are building on efforts from the inaugural May 7, 2009 *National Healthy Housing Summit* in which the National Center for Healthy Housing and the Alliance for Healthy Homes brought together leaders of 40 prominent nonprofits and experts in housing, public health, energy efficiency, environmental health, and tenants' rights to develop the first *National Healthy Housing Action Plan*. Funded by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Home Depot Foundation, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Commission to Build a Healthier America and the Kresge Foundation, the Summit set the stage to launch this collaborative effort to reduce serious indoor health and safety hazards in affordable housing.

Low-income families, the elderly and people of color continue to bear a disproportionate burden of unhealthy housing conditions, including lead-based paint, pesticide misuse, broken heating systems, rodents, leaking water pipes, inoperable smoke alarms, and asthma triggers such as mold and roaches. These dangerous and unhealthy housing conditions not only cause millions of illnesses and injuries, but they cost billions of dollars in health care treatments and lost productivity. Although the concept of healthy housing has been around since the 19th century's promotion of "sanitary housing," the many nonprofits working to improve housing conditions in their communities have never banded together to make safe and healthy affordable housing a **national** priority – until now.

Enclosed is basic information about the National Safe and Healthy Housing Coalition's mission and activities. After reviewing it, we hope you will add your voice and join our collaborative effort to create safer and healthier homes for all families.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Morley
Coalition Chair and Exec. Dir., National Center for Healthy Housing

Enclosures

Thank you for your interest in joining the National Safe and Healthy Housing Coalition. As a member, we will invite you to all meetings, update you regularly, and provide access to new resources. Most important, we will periodically offer you the opportunity to review, comment on, and participate in (always on an “opt-in” basis) communications, briefings, meetings and other activities with key national stakeholders, federal agencies, Congress and other decision-makers on important and timely issues.

Your membership is entirely voluntary. No dues are assessed. We adhere to a written set of Coalition Guidelines [www.nchh.org/Policy/ National-Safe-and-Healthy-Housing-Coalition.aspx](http://www.nchh.org/Policy/National-Safe-and-Healthy-Housing-Coalition.aspx). Your participation confers no legal rights or obligations, and you may end your membership at any time.

To join, please complete the form below and return it by email to Michelle Harvey at mharvey@nchh.org. For more information, contact Rebecca Morley, NCHH Executive Director, at rmorley@nchh.org or 443-539-4159.

Thank you for your interest and support!

National Safe and Healthy Housing Coalition Membership Form

Name of Organization _____

Name of Contact _____

Email Address _____

Mailing Address _____

Phone Number _____

Date _____

MISSION, PRIORITIES AND PARTICIPATION

The National Safe and Healthy Housing Coalition is a broad, voluntary, non-dues coalition of organizations working to improve housing conditions nationwide, especially for low-income families, through education and outreach to key national stakeholders and federal public decision-makers. Guided by a 15-member Provisional Steering Committee (list attached) that is chaired by the National Center for Healthy Housing, the Coalition's primary mission is to implement the most promising and realistic recommendations for a *National Healthy Housing Action Plan* that emanated from the first-ever National Healthy Housing Summit, held in Washington, D.C. on May 7, 2009. The top priorities included:

1. National Collaboration/Partnership-Building Priorities

- Form a National Coalition and Steering Committee, and expand membership.
- Begin a dialogue with health insurers, major employers, and CMS to gain coverage of home-based asthma interventions for children with uncontrolled asthma.
- Engage the Congressional Black, Asian Pacific Islanders, and Hispanic Caucuses.

2. Federal Legislative Priorities

- Work collectively to pass U.S. Senator Jack Reed's two bills: the *Healthy Housing Council Act of 2009* and the *National Healthy Housing Act of 2009*.
- Advocate for sustainable funding/appropriations of current healthy housing programs.
- Support the *Community Building Code Administration Grant Act of 2008*.

3. Federal Regulatory/Administrative Priorities

- Add a healthy housing inspection requirement or incentive to federally-backed mortgages.
- Seek a HUD regulatory/policy change on homes it resells "as is" by requiring a healthy housing inspection or at least disclosure of health and safety hazards.
- Expand recent efforts to "green" HUD-owned and -assisted housing into healthy housing.

The Steering Committee has formed three Working Groups, which are now pursuing several elements of this preliminary agenda as they refine and update it. (Read the full set of policy recommendations from the Summit and the full Summit Report at:

www.nchh.org/Policy/National-Safe-and-Healthy-Housing-Coalition.aspx.)

What's Involved in Participating

Steering Committee meetings, held every 4-6 weeks, are open to all Coalition members and often have a national or federal guest speaker related to the Coalition's priorities. The workgroups hold conference calls between the meetings to pursue these and related priorities, and are likewise open to all Coalition members. Updates to all Coalition members, often with "opt-in" action items for their consideration, are sent periodically. The next full Coalition meeting is planned for spring 2010.

WHY FOCUS ON SAFE AND HEALTHY HOUSING?

Some Housing in the U.S. Rivals the Developing World's

The home is the most dangerous place for U.S. families, according to CDC injury and illness data. An estimated 5.7 million families in the U.S. live in housing that rivals developing countries, with broken heating and plumbing, holes in walls and windows, roaches, rats, falling plaster, and leaking roofs. Millions more in all 50 states live in housing with serious health and safety hazards from mold, exposed wiring, radon, unvented heaters, toxic chemicals, broken stairs, and missing smoke detectors, according to the *State of the Nation's Healthy Housing* (see www.nchh.org).

Unhealthy Housing Causes Millions of Illnesses and Injuries and Costs Taxpayers Billions

Lead Poisoning: An estimated 250,000 children have blood lead levels greater than CDC's level of concern; millions more have levels high enough to cause irreparable harm. About 24 million homes have lead-based paint which, when combined with other environmental toxins, cause lead poisoning, cancer, and other illnesses and results in \$52.9 billion in annual costs.

Asthma from Mold, Roaches and other Triggers: Of the 22.9 million Americans with asthma (the most prevalent chronic childhood illness), about 4.6 million cases are caused by mold, mildew, roaches, mice, dust mites, cleaning agents, and other triggers. These largely preventable cases result in \$3.5 billion/year in treatment and related costs (e.g., missed work/school days), according to the Institutes of Medicine.

Cancer: Radon is the leading cause of lung cancer among non-smokers and kills approximately 21,000 annually (more than drunk driving), according to the EPA. Pesticide exposure in and around the home only increases these cancer risks.

Unintentional Injuries: About half of all injuries – from falls, fires, poisonings, scaldings and other hazards – occur in and around the home and cost \$222 billion in direct medical expenses each year, according to CDC and others.

Children, the Elderly and Other Vulnerable Populations Suffer the Most

Low-income families, minorities, children and the elderly suffer disproportionately from substandard housing, 95% of which are private rental units or owner-occupied houses, according to the American Housing Survey and other sources.

Simple Fixes Save Many Lives, Avoid Countless Illnesses/Injuries and Save Billions

Nearly all of these hazards have cost-effective and often simple fixes. For example:

- **Asthma:** A home assessment, asthma and trigger avoidance education, and reducing home-based triggers (e.g., closed food containers, mattress/pillow encasements and HEPA vacuum filters) significantly improves patient health and greatly reduces treatment costs.
- **Falls:** Replacing missing stair handrails, repairing slippery flooring, broken steps and inadequate lighting, and adding grab bars and baby safety gates save many lives and limbs.