Open Airways for Schools

AMERICAN LUNG ASSOCIATION

Purpose
To help improve self-management and support for school-age children with asthma

Target Population
Schoolchildren ages 8–11 diagnosed with asthma

Goals
- To improve asthma self-management skills
- To decrease asthma emergencies
- To raise asthma awareness among parents or guardians
- To promote broader asthma management coordination among physicians, parents and schools

Years in Operation
1992 – present

Results
Evaluation and testing by the original researchers has shown that asthma health education delivered to children in the school setting increases asthma management skills, reduces asthma symptoms (through trigger avoidance), and improves school performance.19

In the first five years, local Lung Associations were able to reach more than 400,000 children in greater than 30,000 schools throughout the United States. Subsequent evaluations of the program confirmed the original findings and also found that implementing Open Airways for Schools reduced both absences and the use of health care services. For example, a control study of school-based asthma case management among inner-city students in Memphis, Tenn., found that students receiving the Open Airways program and other support missed half as many school days and had significantly fewer emergency department visits and hospital stays than those in the control group.20

Funding
The program is funded by the American Lung Association.

Key Partners
American Lung Association national and local affiliates; school personnel and school district officials; parents; local providers
What Works and Why
The program is integrated into the school setting. Program instructors must complete a standard training program from a certified trainer. Instructors work with local American Lung Association affiliates to deliver the programs, which helps to maintain consistency in delivery, preserve the program’s integrity, ensure use of the most up-to-date materials and information, and obtain support to attain optimal results.

Structure and Operations
The Open Airways for Schools curriculum consists of six 40-minute group lessons for children with asthma. The lessons are held during the school day. The curriculum incorporates an interactive teaching approach — group discussion, stories, games and role play — to promote students’ active involvement in the learning process. Topics covered include basic information about asthma, recognizing and managing asthma symptoms, using medication, avoiding asthma triggers, getting enough exercise, and doing well at school. The Open Airways for Schools classroom kits contain easy-to-use teaching materials, including posters and handouts. Each lesson includes materials for the children to take home to their parents.

The program is available through local Lung Association affiliates to schools and school districts and organizations or individuals interested in providing instructors for the program. Instructors must complete a full-day facilitator training workshop conducted by a certified Open Airways for Schools trainer. The training includes basic information about asthma, modeling of appropriate skills, a thorough review of the Open Airways for Schools curriculum, and tips for working with children.

The Open Airways for Schools curriculum includes a pre-test and a post-test that allow evaluation of the program’s impact.

Barriers to Success
The time demands of school make incorporating additional curricula a challenge.

For More Information
Additional information is available online: http://www.lungusa.org/site/pp.asp?c=dvLUK900E&b=44142