

MAAG Meeting

Wednesday, June 25, 2025

10:00am — 11:30am

Location: Virtual

MACP Program Report

National Asthma Control Program Eliminated

The NACP was eliminated in March along with the elimination of the National Center for Environmental Health. This was all part of the US Health and Human Services effort to reduce workforce and cut spending at the CDC. The Montana Asthma Control program is in limbo and has not received any official word about grant funding for years 2-4 of the cooperative agreement entered into in 2024. Funding for the NACP was not included in the president's initial budget sent to Congress.

Asthma and Allergy Foundation of American and the American Lung Association are advocating to House and Senate members for the reinstatement or inclusion of the NACP going forward. To support these efforts the MACP has submitted impacts stories that can be shared with legislators at the national level. Stories have come out in the media about how asthma home visiting programs support people around the country. Breanne Josephson was interviewed for a story this is still under development.

The MACP is in the fortunate position of having state MSA funding to supplement the program's budget. However, the CDC grant funding represents over half of the program's annual operating budget. The MACP has indefinitely suspend some workplan activities and has identified ways to reduce spending.

It's a difficult time for public health, but there's still a lot of great work happening out there and we don't want to miss out on opportunities to leverage partnerships. MAAG members are encouraged to share any funding or partnership opportunities to leverage resources.

EPA National Environmental Leadership Award in Asthma Management Award

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) National Environmental Leadership Award in Asthma Management is the highest recognition a program and its leaders can receive for delivering excellent environmental asthma management as part of their comprehensive asthma care services. Each year, through this prestigious award, EPA honors exceptional whole-community systems that coordinate public health, housing, environment, clinical care, health care, and community partners to deliver comprehensive care at scale.

The MACP application focused on the program's holistic approach to asthma control in Montana but emphasized its work with the Asthma Home Visiting Program.

In the application, we pointed out that MAP has demonstrated significant improvements in both health outcomes and cost savings among high health care utilizers including:

- \$111,800 in total cost savings (2011–2021) to Montana Medicaid from participants who completed all six program visits.
- 80% reduction in urgent care and emergency department visits for 817 children (between 2011–2025) and 108 adults (between 2020–2025) who completed the program.
- And a 66% reduction in workdays missed and a 53% reduction in schooldays missed due to asthma among participants completing the program.

No money comes with this award, but the MACP is proud to be the 2025 awardee. A statewide press release from DPHHS will be going out June 30th and we are featured on the [EPA](#) and [Asthma Community Network](#) websites. The EPA is also hosting a webinar on August 13th from 11:00 – 12:30 PM MST titled, Wildfire Smoke and Asthma. We will be the featured speaker and then participate in a panel discussion with other air quality and asthma public health professionals. The MACP will send out an announcement about this webinar with registration information when it becomes available.

Stock Albuterol Now Legal in Montana!!

With the passage of [HB600](#), Montana joins 26 other states in allowing stock albuterol in schools. Thank you to the partners who supported the stock albuterol legislation and testified during the legislative session. The MACP started pushing for this over three years ago. The Stock Albuterol in Schools Coalition, formed in 2024, helped develop the legislation and provided feedback on support materials.

A fact sheet and a frequently asked questions resource are already available on the [DPHHS School Health website](#). The MACP and the State School Nurse Consultant, Katie Sheehy, are in the process of refining a comprehensive Stock Albuterol Guide for schools.

Emails with digital letters will be sent to stakeholders impacted by the legislation. Primarily, this will include schools and healthcare partners.

- Healthcare partners in July
- Schools in early August

Addition MACP Actions:

- Contacting pharmaceutical companies (possibly with other stock albuterol states) to advocate for discounted albuterol.
- Updating the Creating Asthma Friendly Schools training to include information about stock albuterol as well as the required training components per HB600.

One thing we'd like our healthcare partners to keep in mind is that, although albuterol is generally inexpensive compared to most medications, schools or districts may be hesitant to spend \$25-\$60 for an inhaler and the necessary spacers, especially if a district has many schools. Given the low cost, healthcare partners or pharmacies could consider donating free stock albuterol in support of their community schools- HB600 has language explicitly allowing these types of gifts or donations.

Big Sky Pulmonary Conference

- 111 participants in 2025 with a 91% satisfaction rating and total cost of \$4K~.
- 2026 Planning Committee is already meeting and contacting potential speakers.

Association of Asthma Educators: Becoming an Asthma Educator and Care Manager Course

- 17 in-state participants
- 14 out-of-state participants
- Additional virtual courses are available throughout the year from AAE.

World Asthma Day & Asthma Awareness Month

May 6th marked another World Asthma Day and the month of May another Asthma Awareness Month. The program put out a press release that was picked up by several news organizations throughout the state. The program also put on multiple social media posts and banners throughout the month. If you're ever looking for social media content, consider sharing posts from <https://www.facebook.com/HEALTH406>.

Montana State Library- Virtual Trunks

The MSL provides lifelong learning support to all Montanans through a combination of librarian professional development and training, program development, and meaningful partnerships. One area we've been able to partner with the state library on is establishing virtual trunks for wildfire smoke events and asthma. A virtual trunk is a digital container full of plug and play programming with instructions, printable activity sheets, supporting documents and more that can help your library put together a great event.

The Smoke Event Safety trunk is already on the website. A collection of chronic disease management trunks are under development and materials for an asthma trunk have been sent.

Surveillance & Evaluation

- 3 Surveillance Reports Under Development (slides include figure snapshots from draft reports)
 - Work-related Asthma in Montana (data from BRFSS & ACBS)
 - Air Quality in Schools
 - Survey sent to schools in fall/winter of 2024:
100+ responses from teachers, responses from 400+ teachers/staff
 - This can tell us about perceptions schools have around air quality policies and practices in their schools.
 - The report will include recommendations for schools on things like communication strategies and policy implementation.
 - Social Determinants of Health and Asthma
- 2 Evaluations Under Development
 - Virtual vs In-Person MAP
 - Analyzing outcomes for participants and resource utilization across the two participation options.
 - MAP Social Determinants of Health Evaluation
 - Analyzes the use of SDOH screener and client referrals to resources.

Veterans Caregiver Support Program

Briggs Alsbury, LCSW | Caregiver Support Program Coordinator- PGCSS
VA Montana Healthcare System

- Program of General Caregiver Support Services (PGCSS)
 - Offers direct peer support, mentoring skills, and caregiver health coaching/training available throughout the year.
 - Open to caregivers of all veterans
 - To enroll reach out to Briggs and the Caregiver Support Team

~103 participants currently in this program
 - Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC)
 - Referred to as the Stipend Program- Monthly stipend sent to caregivers to provide respite and offset costs of not being able to work.
 - Enhanced clinical support services for caregivers of eligible veterans who have a serious illness or injury requiring in-person personal care services and/or significant supervision.
 - Open enrollment program for anyone that's in the caregiving role for a veteran
 - Travel compensation and Beneficiary (Caretaker) Travel compensation
 - Apply online at <https://caregiver.va.gov>

~172 participants currently in this program
- *Neither program requires a referral from a provider.
- Education/training opportunities are available for caregivers
 - Caregiver Health and Wellbeing Coaching (20 minutes)
 - V.A. S.A.V.E Training- Suicide Prevention
 - See full list provided in slides

Wildfire Season Preparation w/ Mary Anderson

DNRC/Meteorologists are predicting hot dry summer this year with higher potential for big wildfires. Wildfirerisk.org predicts wildfire risk nationally by county. Ravalli County is listed as having the highest risk in the nation.

Communicating Risk

- It's important for healthcare and public health partners to increase awareness around the potential health risks of wildfire smoke. A simple way to do this when speaking with patients and the public is to show the comparison image of a human hair vs. PM2.5.
- When giving a 5-10 minutes overview, inform people of resources available.
 - [Fire.airnow.gov](https://fire.airnow.gov)
 - Montana Wildfire Smoke Forecast Alerts (DEQ)
 - [Todaysair.mt.gov](https://todaysair.mt.gov)
 - While this site has highly accurate PM2.5 readings, it does not currently show any air quality readings from low cost sensors. MT DEQ has worked hard to equip a large number of high schools with air quality monitors. These monitors and the DEQ monitors are shown on the fire.airnow.gov map. DEQ has asked DPHHS to direct people to the fire.airnow.gov map, especially those in rural communities

Resources

- Wildfire Smoke Response Toolkits are available on the airquality.mt.gov website. There is a community a toolkit, a school toolkit, a childcare toolkit, and one for individuals. The Clean Air Center Guide is also available and will be updated following the lessons learned in the first year with pilot sites in Ravalli and Missoula Counties
- Case management checklist for asthma home visitors to use with clients during wildfire smoke events.
- Wildfire Smoke: Tips for people with disabilities

Spread the Word

- Wildfire Smoke Preparedness Week: July 13-19
Join in sharing social media (Public Health in the 406)

Attendees

BJ Biskupiak	MT Asthma Control Program- Program Manager
Colin Gale	MT Asthma Control Program- Data Analyst
Stephanie Hernandez	MT Asthma Control Program- Financial Specialist
Mary Anderson	MT Asthma Control Program- Wildfire Smoke Coordinator
Angie Brakefield	MT Asthma Control Program- Health Education Specialist
Mary Anderson	MT Asthma Control Program- Air Quality/Wildfire Smoke Coordinator
Callan Conroy	MT DPHHS- Quality Improvement Specialist
Lori Byron, MD	Healthcare Professionals for a Healthy Climate
Jason Kleinschmidt	St. Vincent Healthcare, Respiratory Therapy Neurodiagnostics Manager
Marian Kummer, MD	American Academy of Pediatrics
Mary Millin	Disability Advisor
Charity Middlemas	Lewis and Clark County Health Department- MAP Home Visitor
Mary Sparks	Lewis and Clark County Health Department- MAP Supervisor
Jessie Fernandes, MPH, CPH	DPHHS Health Improvement Section- Section Supervisor
Elaine Alston, PA, PAC	Gallatin County Health Department, MAP Home Visitor
Margaret Mullins, MS	DPHHS – Social Determinants of Health Program Coordinator
Courtney Geary, MPH	MT Asthma Control Program- Epidemiologist/Evaluator
Will Gardner, MPH, CPH	DPHHS Health Improvement Section – Lead Epidemiologist
LeAnn Harrison, RN	oneHealth (Custer County Health Department)- MAP Home Visitor
Brian Duke	AstraZeneca- Biologic Sales Specialist- Medimmune Biologic Division
Jennifer Vandekop	Anaconda Deer Lodge County Health Department- MAP Home Visitor
Briggs Alsbury	VA Montana