

A Qualitative Approach to Understanding Asthma Triggers in the District of Columbia's Public Housing

Dharmil Bhavsar, 2026, Molecular Biology

Princeton Alliance for Collaborative Research and Innovation (PACRI), Howard University School of Social Work

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Introduction

- The Howard PACRI project focuses on investigating DC public housing conditions and management
- DC has an asthma rate higher than the national average
- The population of interest is asthmatic children in public housing

Objective of the Study

The goal of this project is to perpetuate policy changes that ensure the best living conditions in public housing, especially regarding asthma triggers (mold, dust, pests, etc.).

Methods

- A mixed method approach was utilized
- Data was collected by interviewing housing authorities and caregivers (community health workers are next)
- Using the qualitative data, the team will design a quantitative survey for public housing residents
- My responsibilities included recruiting interviewees, conducting and transcribing interviews, analyzing transcripts, and presenting findings

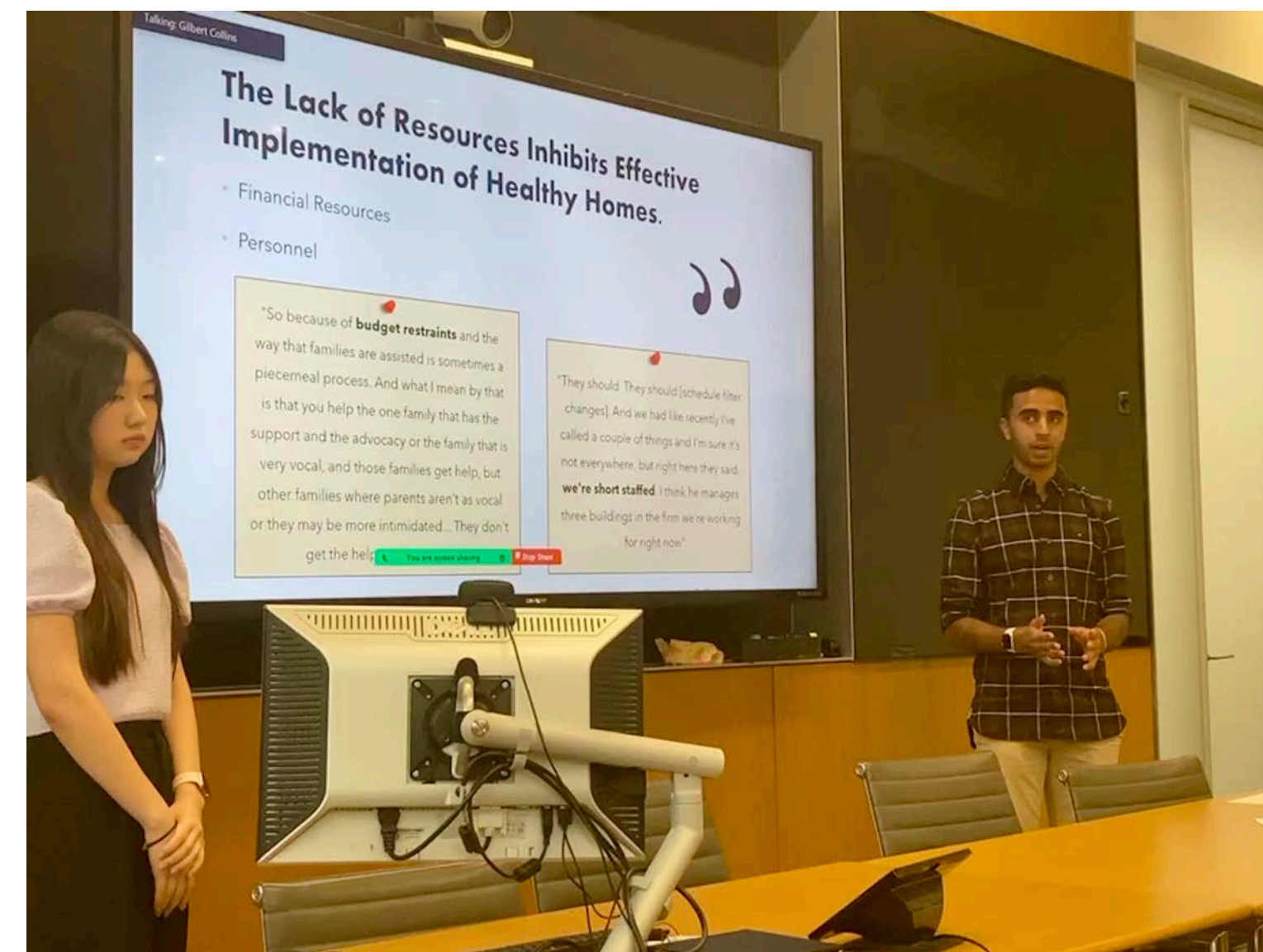
Results

We summarized our findings from each housing authority interview into the following five themes:

1. *There is a lack of familiarity regarding asthma and asthma prevention.*
2. *The Healthy Homes Program policies in place are not enforced or monitored.*
3. *Feelings of distrust, fear, and inferiority deter residents from requesting maintenance services.*
4. *Public housing is not fulfilling its responsibilities to ensure safe living conditions for residents.*
5. *Lack of resources inhibits effective implementation of Healthy Homes.*

The table below summarizes the code(s) attributed to each theme as well as the percentage of participants that resonate with each.

Theme	Coded Attribute	Percent of Participants (N=9)
Theme 1	In a Position of Leadership	100%
Theme 1	Limited Knowledge of Healthy Homes Programs	55.6%
Theme 1	Limited Knowledge of Asthma and its Triggers	55.6%
Theme 2	No-Smoking Rules are Violated	100%
Theme 3	Mentions Residents' Reluctancy to Reach Out for Help	66.7%
Theme 4	Issues with Mold, Ventilation, Pests	88.9%
Theme 5	Financial Support and Resources Needed	77.8%
Overall	Expressed Willingness to Fight for Residents and their Needs	44.4%
Overall	Seniors In Need of Help	44.4%



We presented our preliminary findings at the PACRI Workshop on August 3rd and 4th. Pictured is Irene Park (left) and Dharmil Bhavsar (right)

The following are suggestions from interviewees on how we can best help public housing residents:

- *Implement in-person and virtual educational programs about asthma care*
- *Create flyers, games, crossword puzzles, etc. with information*
- *Focus on helping senior citizens in addition to children*
- *Encourage the involvement of community health workers*

As the very first interviewee claimed
"I don't know what it is with housing. It's like nobody cares."

Discussion

- Children in low-income housing are proven to have an increased risk of being exposed to allergens
- Gathering data from caregivers (generally parents) will be crucial to understanding what factors put children at risk the most for asthma

Future Directions

- To understand how other factors like genetics and outdoor conditions contribute to children's asthma
- To learn how to apply this health intervention process to other areas

Conclusion

A strong voice of advocacy is needed to empower public housing residents to better their living conditions.

Acknowledgements

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