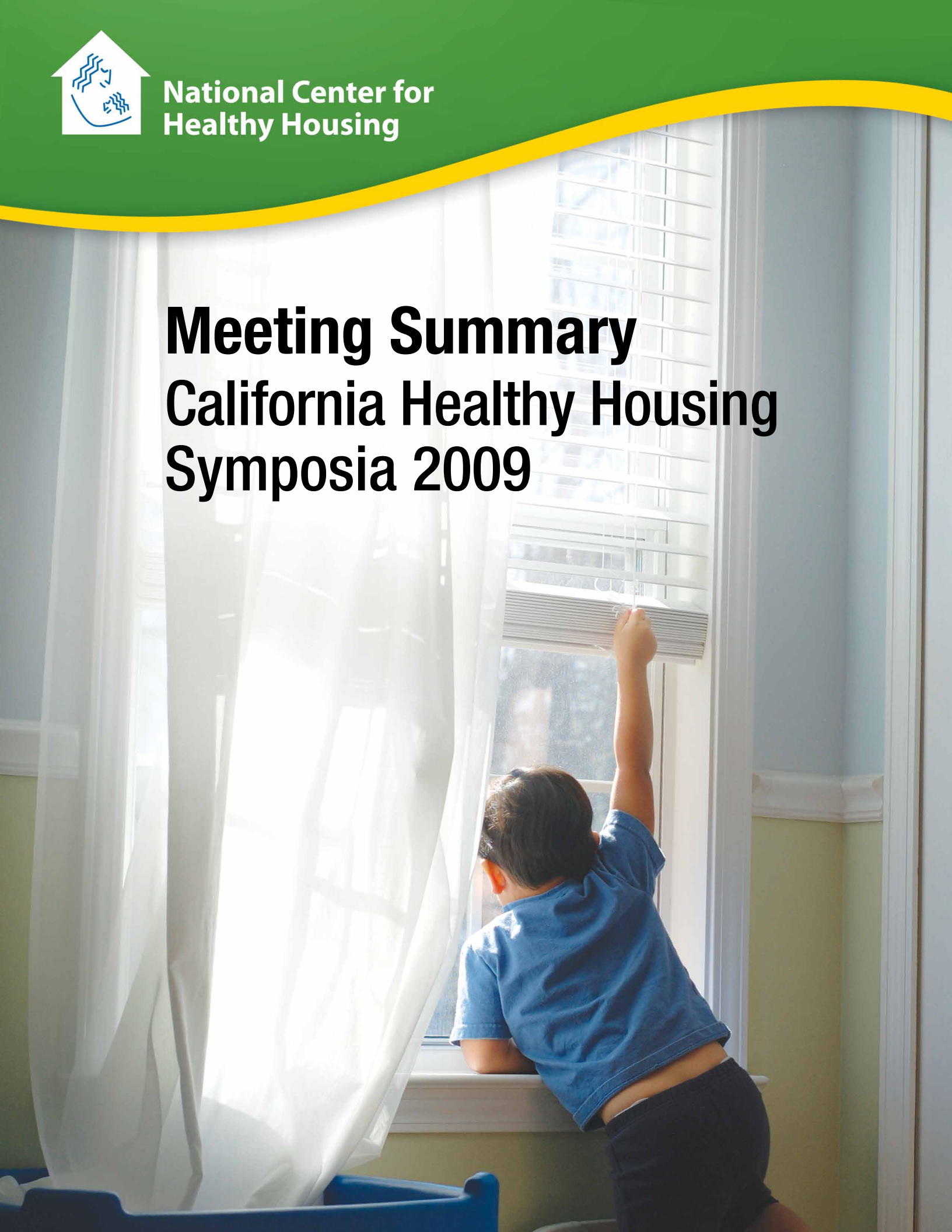




National Center for  
Healthy Housing

# Meeting Summary

## California Healthy Housing Symposia 2009





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Funded by The California Endowment,  
with additional support from California Breathing, CDPH

August 20, 2009



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# Overview

*Healthy Homes* is a holistic model that integrates environmental, affordable housing, and public health concerns into a broader planning and policy agenda. In May and June of 2009, the National Center for Healthy Housing (NCHH) organized a series of regional symposia across California, with funding from The California Endowment (TCE) and logistical and planning support from the Healthy Homes Collaborative, to facilitate discussion among key stakeholders, identify local concerns, and evaluate models and research to inform a statewide Healthy Homes Action Plan.

In March 2009, NCHH reached out to prospective symposium partners to gauge their interest in serving as a local sponsor. Partners in five communities—Sacramento, Oakland, Fresno, Los Angeles, and San Diego—agreed to host local symposia:

- Rural Community Assistance Corporation (RCAC), Sacramento
- Fresno Interdenominational Refugee Ministries (FIRM), Fresno
- Healthy Homes Collaborative, Los Angeles
- City of San Diego
- Environmental Health Coalition, San Diego
- American Lung Association/California, San Diego

- Proyecto de Casas Saludables, San Diego
- Alameda County CLPPP, Oakland

(See Appendix 1 for a description of these partners and other key stakeholders.)

Participating organizations tailored their symposium's agenda to address local needs. NCHH offered reimbursement for meeting expenses and assisted with meeting logistics, agenda development, and speaker identification. California Breathing (California Dept. of Public Health), The California Endowment, the Healthy Homes Collaborative, and government agencies also distributed information about the local meetings.

Through the Healthy Homes Collaborative (HHC) and California Breathing, NCHH was able to coordinate these local symposia with a statewide healthy housing conference, *Healthy Housing in California: Reducing the Burden of Asthma and Other Health Impacts*, primarily sponsored by California Breathing, on June 16–17. It drew about 180 diverse stakeholders from throughout the state, including many symposia participants, health and housing advocates, practitioners, government officials, and others. TCE funding enabled 12 individuals from community-based organizations to attend.



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# Results from the Five Local Symposia

Each symposium differed widely in format and content, but all produced new partnerships and plans of action, as summarized below. (The full presentations and other meeting materials may be found at [www.nchh.org/Policy/Policy-Projects/Healthy-Housing-in-California.aspx](http://www.nchh.org/Policy/Policy-Projects/Healthy-Housing-in-California.aspx).)

## **Sacramento— Summary and Recommendations**

Sacramento held the first symposium, geared toward creating statewide policy objectives as well as addressing important local issues. The “Healthy Homes, Healthy Families Roundtable” targeted public policy decision makers and healthy housing professionals, 37 of whom attended. Stan Keasling, CEO of the Rural Community Assistance Corporation and meeting host, opened the meeting with a compelling story of a young boy who drowned in a cesspool outside a migrant labor camp.

The bulk of the meeting combined formal presentations with roundtable discussions. Presenters included officials from the California Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Branch, HUD’s Region IX Office of Healthy Homes and Lead Hazard Control, the California Department of Community Services and Development, Sacramento County Public Health Department, and the City of Sacramento Code Enforcement Department. Research and data were presented by the UC Berkeley Center for Children’s Environmental Health, CA Rural Legal Assistance, and the CA Institute for Rural Studies. The Sacramento Housing Alliance and the CA Coalition for Rural Housing also provided perspectives on statewide housing policy issues.

### **Code Enforcement: Sacramento’s Model Policies**

The City of Sacramento has created a proactive rental inspection program, funded by property owners at \$28.00 per unit annually, which could serve as a model for other

parts of the state. Properties are inspected every five years. The City’s Housing Division also has a complaint-driven program funded partially by the general fund (approx 50%) and by fees, fines, and penalties. Its Vacant Building Program imposes penalties of up to \$1,000 for the first 30 days of violations and up to \$5,000 for the second and any continuous 30-day violations. If an owner had two vacant buildings in violation within a one-year time frame, a \$2,000 penalty for the first 30 days is imposed and up to \$10,000 for the second 30-day period for each property in violation. These penalties are waived if the owner agrees to rehab the property.

### **Land Use: A Key Issue for Equitable and Healthy Housing**

Land use policy was a key topic, with Modesto annexations serving as an example of policy decisions that have led to communities becoming geographically isolated. The maps shown here provide an illuminating depiction of how certain communities of color have been systematically left out of important land-use decisions. The resulting situation is a severe lack of government services and infrastructure.

### **Rural and Farm Worker Housing Needs**

Several participants spoke of rural and farm worker housing needs. Two studies of farm worker conditions in Napa and Mendocino found that only 6% of workers owned their homes, more than 25% lived in severely overcrowded conditions, and many of the Napa workers are traveling 90 minutes to work.

The CHAMACOS project, presented by Dr. Asa Bradman, estimated sources, pathways, and levels of *in utero* and postnatal exposures of children living in an agricultural community. The study goals included (1) determining the relationship of exposures to neurodevelopment, growth, and respiratory disease; and (2) reducing exposures to children with interventions and community

**Table 1.** Comparison of 1999 HUD Home Survey<sup>1</sup> to CHAMACOS Home Inspection Data

	HUD		CHAMACOS
	All (%)	Hispanic (%)	(%)
Signs of rodents	8.2	12.7	22.8
Broken plaster or peeling paint	2.8	4.8	57.8
Water leak inside home	9.4	11.2	16*
Density (people/room)			
0.50 or less	69.0	40.9	1.5
0.51–1.00	28.5	46.1	19.1
1.01–1.50	2.1	10.2	30.7
1.51 or more	0.4	2.8	48.7

<sup>1</sup>HUD Survey are national estimates based on U.S. Census

\*Only for leaks under the kitchen sink

outreach. The study found that more than 50% of homes had dust mite allergen at levels associated with sensitization, and 25% had cockroach levels associated with sensitization. All homes had dust with pesticide residues, either from agricultural use, home use, or both. Dr. Bradman explained that research on the impact of home environments on health is crucial to produce new information and tools, but that research is not a focus of communities where the primary need is additional affordable housing.

### Relevant State Legislation

Three state bills could improve healthy housing or be leveraged toward further changes at the local level:

**The State Affordable Housing Trust Fund Act (SB–500)**, introduced in February by Senate President pro tem Darrell Steinberg, would raise \$2 billion through fees on real estate transactions to provide a permanent source of revenue for affordable housing.

**The Community Equity Investment Act of 2009 (SB–194)**, passed by the Senate on May 22, 2009, would establish incentives for local government to encourage planning decisions for disadvantaged local communities (defined as fringe or below 80% SAMI) and deficient

housing, facilities, and infrastructure. Local governments would identify unincorporated communities in proximity to a city’s boundary, identify infrastructure deficits, establish goals to address deficits, and then include a comprehensive plan to address them.

Assembly Member Juan Arambula introduced AB-853 to provide procedures for annexing fringe and island communities/territories that lack basic infrastructure, provided that at least 25% of the island community’s registered voters signed a petition supporting incorporation and presented it to the municipality for approval. After approval, no special district could terminate annexation. This bill has not been the subject of a hearing.

### Resource Needs and Challenges

The Sacramento meeting touched on many issues, highlighting the relationships between poverty, race, energy efficiency, and affordable housing. There was a strong call for more research that would provide proof in legal cases and highlight issues that are usually subsumed and need greater attention. Several participants suggested framing substandard housing as a civil rights issue, since unhealthy housing conditions disproportionately burden racial and ethnic minorities. Similarly, rural housing



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was a significant focus of discussion since undeveloped communities where many farm workers live are highly susceptible to environmental exposures and unjust living conditions. Farm worker advocates recommended gathering input from farm workers if a new housing policy is developed that will impact them.

### **Possible Action Steps**

Specific strategy and policy action items that emerged from the Sacramento meeting included:

- Encourage the CA Senate Committee on Food and Agriculture to address housing issues;
- Use stimulus funding as an opportunity to forge cross-disciplinary collaborations (e.g., weatherization and health);
- Identify ways to enroll absentee landlords into government programs such as weatherization and ensure homes are kept affordable after renovation and weatherization work;
- Establish uniform codes and training of inspectors on those codes;
- Conduct a bus tour of housing conditions for legislators and others;
- Address home-based child care conditions as part of healthy homes;
- Support more equitable land use policies (overlay health and land use data) (e.g., SB-194);
- Study and document housing conditions and health and educational outcomes—especially for farm workers;
- Create a recognition program for voluntary compliance with a healthy housing label;
- Create a statewide rental registration requirement with fees going to fund inspections;
- Ensure that Section 8 tenant-based requirements are enforced; and
- Apply for a lead hazard control grant.



*Fresno Community Meeting*

## **Fresno— Summary and Recommendations**

The Fresno symposium, hosted by the Fresno Interdenominational Refugee Ministries (FIRM), was geared toward community members, mostly Hmong and Laotian refugees, who face unhealthful housing conditions on a daily basis. Approximately 25 community organizers, citizens, and others attended.

Following a healthy homes overview by NCHH's Rebecca Morley, participants joined a roundtable discussion of local healthy housing issues. Fresno has historically had a wide variety of low rent housing in a depressed housing market. Fresno County has one of the highest asthma prevalence rates and the highest lead poisoning rate in the state. Substandard housing is common due to absentee landlords and fearful residents. Almost 44% of refugees in Fresno live in poverty, the worst concentration of poverty in the U.S. Crowding is a significant problem.

### **Key Priorities**

Key priorities identified by the participants included:

1. Safety and Violence—there was a universal concern about gangs, drugs, and crime;
2. Good Quality Homes—so that children have the opportunity to grow up healthy;
3. Chemical Exposure;

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4. Better Quality Jobs;
  5. Affordable Housing.

### **Possible Action Items**

As a community that is relatively new to formal healthy housing initiatives, participants discussed how strategies from other parts of the state might be applied in Fresno. One community organizer identified a severely dilapidated property (Somerset) just adjacent to FIRM. This decommissioned WWII-era military housing structure is home to many low-income families because it is “affordable” at \$600 per month despite its deplorable condition. From their own experience living at this development, the organizers were aware of pests, ventilation problems, and other unhealthy conditions. Linda Kite of the Healthy Homes Collaborative suggested an organizing strategy for the property.

One organizing avenue is to determine whether the property owner had complied with the federal lead disclosure rule. Additionally, they can promote integrated pest management (IPM) through the following steps:

1. Set baseline cockroach traps;
2. Conduct green cleaning of units using vinegar, Bon Ami, and detergent;
3. Apply boric acid to cracks and crevasses;
4. Use traps to monitor roaches;
5. HEPA Vacuum the units; and
6. Trap for roaches again.

Contemporaneously, they can encourage the City to issue code citations to require structural repairs by the property owner. This process will demonstrate the value of IPM and make the case that the responsibility for managing pests is shared by tenants and property owners.

The participants were also energized by the vision of a Somerset as a green rehabilitation demonstration project. Partnering with local community-based organizations and tapping the expertise of advocates in both northern and southern California would strengthen statewide healthy homes efforts and provide a learning opportunity for local groups.

## **Los Angeles— Summary and Recommendations**

The Los Angeles meeting was hosted by the Healthy Homes Collaborative (HHC), which has a track record of bringing local advocacy groups and community-based organizations (CBOs) together with government agencies to work on common goals. The symposium, attended by approximately 65 stakeholders, sought to “establish a local baseline” where agencies recapped their basic work plan and critically analyzed their strengths and weaknesses to improve outcomes.

Following the plenary, participants heard from three panels of grassroots advocacy groups, city and county code enforcement officials, and the state Department of Public Health, each working on different fronts to address a common problem. Small cross-disciplinary groups of 12–14 then caucused to discuss implementation strategies and barriers.

### **Agency Capacity and Coordination**

The City of Los Angeles has paved the way in developing the pro-active “Systematic Code Enforcement Program” (SCEP) inspection model. SCEP collaborates with CBOs during the inspection process and integrates them in decision-making. SCEP inspectors are equipped with electronic tablets to take photos, fill out reports, tabulate data, and upload everything online in real time.



*Jang Woo Nam, Organizer, Koreatown Immigrant Worker's Alliance*

**Table 2.** Code Enforcement in Southeast LA, presentation by LACLC

<p><b>Southeast LA Healthy Housing Program</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct Outreach; Health and Housing Surveying; Lead dust wipe sampling</li> <li>• School presentations</li> <li>• Church presentations</li> <li>• LSWP Trainings</li> <li>• Tenant Rights workshops</li> </ul>	<p><b>Peligro en el Hogar del Medio Ambiente</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creando Comunidades saludables atravez de educacion y activismo</li> </ul> <p><i>©Southeast Healthy Homes Program: LA Community Legal Center</i></p>
<p><b>Positive outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LACLC has established working relations with code enforcement and partnership with LA County DHS.</li> <li>• Established referral systems to LA County EHS; results in cases throughout Southeast LA.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Challenges/Policy Suggestion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No Rent Control, causes tenants to be intimidated. Poses a challenge in organizing</li> <li>• LACLC (CBO) gives tenants basic tenant rights under California Civil Code</li> <li>• No SCEP Program, no control enforcement, complaint based inspections causes prolong violations</li> <li>• LACLC proposed to SCEP Program for City of Huntington Park in 2005, reintroduction is in our scope of work.</li> </ul>

By capitalizing on assets like SCEP, other programs can better follow suit. For instance, the County of Los Angeles Department of Public Health, the nation’s largest public health department, has strong potential for positively affecting millions of lives.

**Possible Action Items**

**Local Government Agencies:** The sheer scale of local housing issues and the complexity and number of programs creates challenges for the neediest families. While the City and County have made significant strides in addressing substandard housing conditions, they must continue to listen to advocates and other stakeholders in adjusting policies and programs to increase their effectiveness. Recommendations for improvements included:

- Greater coordination between government programs and the CBOs—particularly on inspections—to

reach families, since CBOs have relationships with community members.

- With as many as 38 public health programs in the county, better coordination within government agencies.
- Better communication between the city housing department and city agencies not at the table, such as Building and Safety.
- Shifting code enforcement from giving owners multiple notices to criminalizing code violations.
- Increasing efficiency and access to units through the County’s effort to inspect MF units proactively.
- Government grants and contracts (e.g., 20% of grant funding) to CBOs.

**NGO/Private Sector:** CBOs’ on-the-ground work is essential for advancing innovative solutions, as they

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have unique access to the community and work on a variety of forward-looking projects. Government agencies and CBOs must develop partnerships to build on and avoid duplicative strategies while employing effective programs on a wider scale. Given the current funding climate, they must remain open to sharing the limited resources available where it makes sense. Recommendations for improving the efficacy of the nonprofit and private sectors include:

- Qualifying more contractors to perform Integrated Pest Management.
- CBOs supporting government proposals and building political will.
- “Selling” healthy homes program to tenants and finding ways to incentivize participation.

Additional recommendations included the need to set goals and evaluate results and for all parties to strive for transparency and collective decision-making.

## Next Steps

Rich discussions began to establish the framework for a collaborative local vision.

- Follow-up meetings throughout the year will enable the discussion to evolve, with strong interest in formal meetings (e.g., through local symposia or conferences) and informal ones (e.g., through emails or small group meetings).
- The participants are eager to create a work plan that details the commitments of each organization.
- Due to the large number of projects and past programs, Los Angeles has the potential to lead the state and collaborate with other cities to exchange best practices and ensure for efficient models tailored to local needs.
- The next healthy homes symposium in September 2009 will focus on integrating cutting-edge science and research into the healthy homes vision and implementation strategy.

## San Diego— Summary and Recommendations

San Diego healthy homes proponents sought to reach two key audiences through their local event—policymakers and community members. They designed a two-part event: an afternoon legislative session near government agencies and an evening community forum in the high-risk community of City Heights. The presentations connected substandard housing to disparities in economic status, ethnicity, and race and presented real-life situations to show the faces of those directly affected by substandard housing conditions.

### Legislative Summit

Councilmember Donna Frye opened the well-attended legislative summit (approximately 54 attendees) by citing successes in the lead poisoning arena and challenging a diverse group of stakeholders to join her in fighting for safe and healthy housing. NCHH’s Rebecca Morley provided an overview of national healthy housing policy trends and the evidence supporting healthy homes interventions. Genoveva Aguilar of Proyecto Casas Saludables, and Arcela Nunez of the National Latino Research Center at Cal State San Marcos (NLRC), provided compelling case studies and data on how Californians (and specific racial and ethnic groups) are being affected by the lack of responsibility and action by both the public and private sectors.



*Councilmember Donna Frye*

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Doug Farquhar of the National Conference of State Legislators concluded with a presentation on housing laws and regulations, including code enforcement. An audience discussion followed touching on code enforcement, legal action, and funding preventative code enforcement. Participants generally agreed that code enforcement continues to be tenant-driven via complaints, which puts the responsibility and risk on those most vulnerable. They also agreed that a more proactive, government-driven approach is needed to address healthy housing issues systematically, along with housing code changes to provide authority to correct for mold, pest infestations, and other substandard conditions adequately.

## Community Forum

To accommodate working families and ensure strong community participation, San Diego advocates convened an evening forum that over 180 community members attended, including agencies, promotores (community health workers), tenants, homeowners, and a small number of landlords.

The goal was to generate interest in passing a healthy homes ordinance in San Diego. The Spanish-speaking program included testimonials from community organizers who advocate for the improvement of local systems, as well as personal stories from promotores.

Leticia Ayala of the Environmental Health Coalition facilitated the dialogue, during which participants agreed to include North County farm workers in future work and to work closely with Poder Popular to address housing issues in the northern region of San Diego County. The meeting included a screening of a video on community health workers' healthy housing efforts to increase awareness and show the community an avenue for empowerment and social change. The meeting closed with a raffle where winners were awarded healthy homes items, such as cleaning materials and air-tight plastic containers to secure food from pests. The event served as a launching ground for an even larger event to propose a healthy homes ordinance to government agencies in August 2009.



*San Diego Community Meeting*

## Possible Action Items

Key recommendations emerging from the San Diego events and from post-summit recommendations offered by the National Latino Research Center included:

- Require inspections between tenancies at turnover:
  - Fund the program by redirecting the rental unit business tax to housing inspections or by raising the rental unit business tax.
  - Train inspectors (HH certification for inspectors).
  - Create standards for cleanliness modeled after HUD's housing quality standards.
  - Establish an independent inspection group to monitor inspections after the ordinance passes.
- Protect tenants beyond cause eviction/retaliation (e.g., prevent landlords from charging tenants for upgrades):
  - Provide tenants' rights information to tenants as part of lease.
  - Establish city funding mechanism to pay for tenant relocation where a unit is uninhabitable.
- Create a healthy housing strategic plan identifying local and regional research, education, training, advocacy, and policy needs that link health and housing and cost-effective methods to address hazards:

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– Create structure for better coordinating healthy housing efforts in the county among key housing, health, policy, code enforcement, legal assistance, property management, community development, green building, and other stakeholders.

– Build on the NLRC report, *Un-Doing the Privilege of Healthy Housing: An Overview of the Intersections of Health, Race/Ethnicity, Poverty, Environment, Politics, & Housing (2008)*, to create the strategic plan.

– Integrate rural housing issues into the healthy housing framework by more outreach and direct attention to housing issues in the northern region of the county

– Frame the issue of substandard housing at a regional level to ensure that the community’s voice is heard from every perspective.

- Establish a healthy housing training center in San Diego to provide training and education resources to San Diego, Orange County, and the Inland Empire:

– Develop educational resources for policymakers, code enforcement, and other health and housing agencies.

– Create or modify culturally and linguistically appropriate healthy housing educational and training materials to serve the needs of San Diego’s diverse populations.

– Build the capacity of community leaders to work as health promoters and advocates for healthy housing in their local communities.

## **Oakland— Summary and Recommendations**

Mark Allen, Director of the Alameda County Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program, opened the meeting. In 1998, Alameda County began focusing on healthy homes issues. They received one of the first HUD healthy homes grants in 2000 and have completed six lead hazard grants. Maricela Foster provided a brief history on how Alameda County has moved from being focused strictly on lead to the broader healthy homes approach. NCHH’s

Rebecca Morley provided an overview of new research and policies related to healthy housing.

Dennis Jordan presented Alameda’s Healthy Homes Program, which focuses on children with asthma, injury prevention, lead screening, and caregiver education. It works with many partners, including weatherization programs, housing authorities, utilities, the city’s Minor and Emergency Repair Programs, laboratories, neighborhood clinics, and the American Lung Association.

The program provides:

- Allergen reduction treatment;
- Radon testing;
- Safety measure installation (smoke detectors, fire extinguisher, anti-slip bathmat);
- IPM measures (application of boric acid in kitchen, cleaning of refrigerator drip pan and coils, bait traps where active infestations exist);
- Improved ventilation, including heater and exhaust fan cleaning;
- Removal of surface mold; and
- HEPA/charcoal air filters for child’s bedroom.

Additional measures (as needed) include:

- Removing carpet in the asthmatic child’s bedroom and replacing with cleanable floor surfaces;
- Minor plumbing leak repairs;
- Window replacement (broken windows only);
- Minor roof repair for leaks;
- Replacement of handrails; and
- Installation of grab bars in baths.

The program plans to add the following measures in its next grant-funded project:

- Energy conservation measures;
- Water conservation measures; and
- Seismic safety measures.

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The program has completed 253 units since November 2007 at a cost per house of approximately \$300–\$500, excluding ventilation. With installation of handrails and exhaust fans and fixing interior leaks, the average cost is \$1,500.

Alameda County works with the Oakland Housing Authority to conduct visual assessments for clients who do not have asthma but may have a mold problem. As a result of the collaboration, the housing authority has seen a significant drop in their property damage losses – from \$75,000 to \$12,000 per year. By using their loss savings to re-invest in the properties, they are now able to fund window repairs and replacement, improved ventilation, and roof replacement. Participants suggested that it would be useful to show the health care savings and the educational savings associated with this program.

Marie Roberts De La Parra, founder and principal of BMB Construction Properties, presented her work to engage the African American community in green building through the “greenovations,” which her development company performs in both market rate and affordable housing. She added that “green jobs” can provide a pathway out of poverty if they offer a living wage (more than \$15/hour). Several novel examples of resources and programs were mentioned, including a local nonprofit that harvests excess fruit growing in homeowners’ yards and delivers it to low-income seniors and the Rising Center, which offers a free “green house call” to give residents at all income levels free energy and water-use recommendations, as well as items such as light bulbs and clotheslines.

### **Focus of the Strategic Work Groups**

The participants then broke into three facilitated work groups to discuss these questions:

- What healthy housing issues do you confront in your current activities?
- What do you need to improve your understanding of healthy housing strategies?
- What benefits and opportunities do you see in a more coordinated effort around healthy housing?

### **Possible Action Items**

All groups agreed that training of tenants and property owners is a high priority, especially with respect to integrated pest management, mold, and assessing healthy homes hazards. Participants suggested clearly delineating tenant and landlord responsibilities and developing strategies for addressing each. Both landlords and tenants need to learn about remediation options, including the availability of resources for remediation and how to access them. Participants supported the idea of connecting healthy homes issues to community level concerns, such as access to healthy foods, access to physical activity opportunities, foreclosures, community capacity building, and aging in place. Other suggestions included the following:

- Strengthening enforcement by having building officials and city attorneys at the table is a key area for future work, especially in light of “predatory habitability,” where unscrupulous property owners prey on immigrant and refugee populations and pressure them into accepting substandard conditions.
- There is a need for a proactive and preventive rental inspection program that includes systematic inspections paid for by fees. (The fee should be allowable under Proposition 218 because the rental property is a commercial business.)
- Government agencies must find ways to implement a “one touch” approach to improve agency coordination, streamline service delivery, and improve consumer perception of government programs.

It was the consensus of all three facilitated working groups to meet again in September to develop strategies to advance the healthy homes agenda in Alameda County. Following the meeting participants were sent: A list of the issues raised in the break-out sessions, the participant list, and a survey asking participants to assess the value and organization of the meeting. Participants were also asked to suggest individuals and organizations who didn’t attend the May meeting, but who should be invited to the September meeting.

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## Statewide Healthy Housing Symposium

The five community meetings culminated with a statewide symposium, *Healthy Housing in California: Reducing the Burden of Asthma and Other Health Impacts*, sponsored by CDPH's California Breathing asthma program. The first day featured presentations from government agency representatives, green building architects, energy efficiency experts, grassroots organizations, legal aid groups, a property management association, and others. Over 180 people participated, and their evaluations indicated that the meeting was well-received and that the topics covered were of significant interest.

### Day One

San Francisco City and County Supervisor Sophie Maxwell opened the event by challenging participants to work across sectors to improve housing conditions for families and children. NCHH's Rebecca Morley provided an overview of healthy housing issues and summarized the results of the preceding five community symposia. Linda Rudolph, Director of the State's Department of Public



*San Francisco City and County Supervisor Sophie Maxwell*

Health, Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, described how health considerations should be integrated across programs and policies.

Matt Ammon of HUD's Office of Healthy Homes and Lead Hazard Control described HUD's strategy for mainstreaming healthy housing and transforming the quality of housing for America's families. He acknowledged the significant innovation and leadership that California programs have demonstrated. Participants also heard from practitioners including a green building expert (Anthony Bernheim; Green Building Council), a building inspections manager (Mike Reynolds; California Association of Code Enforcement Officials), and a representative of a leading healthy homes community-based organization (Nancy Halpern Ibrahim, Esperanza Community Housing Corporation).

The remainder of the day featured six breakout sessions with facilitated dialogue and critical analysis on code enforcement strategies, community-based advocacy, the use of research to advance healthy housing, health care strategies, creating green and healthy housing, and principles of healthy housing for property owners and managers. The day ended with a wrap-up session, including representatives from the California Department of Public Health and the Department of Community Services and Development's weatherization program. The evaluations of Day One suggested a significant interest in green building, evidenced by the high attendance in the Green and Healthy breakout session and may suggest a policy direction. Nancy Halpern Ibrahim also challenged the participants to think of healthy housing as a human right, not only a civil or legal right.

### Day Two

Day Two included concurrent sessions of training and strategic planning. Through his partnership with the National Healthy Homes Training Center, Dennis Jordan of Alameda County's Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program offered the training course "Healthy Homes for Community Health Workers," which is designed to strengthen the knowledge base and practical skills of those who make home visits for a variety of purposes. Thirty-five people participated in the training.



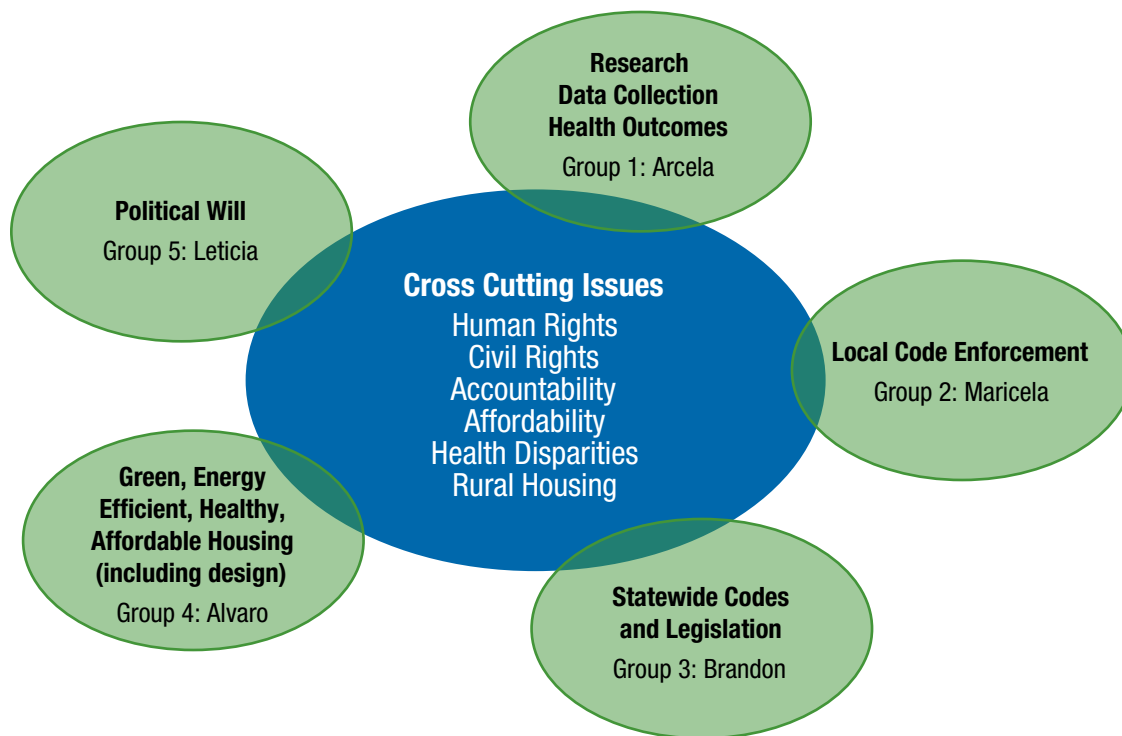
Rebecca Morley of NCHH and Janet Tobacman of California Breathing facilitated the day-long strategic planning session. Designed to build on the first day, it drew on the participants' collective experiences and sought to knit together lessons learned from the five local symposia. To inspire creativity and facilitate open communication, the session combined a variety of discursive and kinetic activities. Approximately 90 people participated.

The hosts of the five local symposia presented the results of their meetings, the implications for their communities, and policy ideas worthy of consideration at the state level. Participants also heard from Dr. Rajiv Bhatia of the San Francisco Department of Public Health about San Francisco's experience connecting health to planning decisions—recognizing that homes and neighborhoods do not occur in isolation from one another. Dr. Bhatia recommended tapping into tools unique to California, such as the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) in preventing deleterious health effects.

As part of a group visioning activity, participants expressed their hopes for what the newspaper might say about healthy housing after three months, one year, and five years if their collective efforts were successful. Of the 130 or more vision statements, common themes emerged and are depicted in the “headlines” below:

- *Statewide coalition proposes state law for HH code enforcement program.*
- *The state of CA will rehabilitate more than 500,000 homes in the coming months thanks to funding and resource from HUD, CDC, and foundations.*
- *Successful “Healthy Housing in CA” symposium to become an annual event.*
- *Local enforcement agencies collaborate with community groups and public health experts to map out healthy home plans.*
- *CA aging in place home design requirements saves millions.*

**Figure 1.** Planning Categories



- *New study shows CA has the healthiest housing stock in the nation.*
- *CA/fed agencies report achievement of healthy conditions in 80% of housing; remaining 20% expected to achieve healthy status in next two years.*
- *Dramatic reduction of asthma rates, lead poisoning, and home injuries due to statewide healthy homes efforts.*
- *HMOs reimburse families for asthma prevention in the home.*
- *Governor signs bill requiring annual healthy home certification of all residential rental properties.*
- *CA is the best state for healthy, safe, and affordable green housing.*

A small group of volunteers assembled the vision statements into five categories:

- Building Political Will
- Local Code Enforcement
- Statewide Codes and Legislation
- Green, Energy Efficient, Healthy, Affordable Housing
- Research (Data Collection and Health Outcomes)

A handful of cross-cutting issues were also identified, including framing healthy housing as a civil rights and human rights issue, tackling health disparities, and dealing with affordability.

Participants acknowledged that the lack of affordable housing is often the root cause of unhealthy housing. A related issue is the rapid increase in housing prices versus the slow increase in wages. This is coupled with the core idea many landlords have that owning rental property is a business venture to be profited from instead of a vital service that provides safe and affordable living conditions. These issues should place prominently in healthy homes discussions.

Small groups of 10–15 were then asked to identify strategies for each of the six categories.

**Three-Month Strategy:** The group's three-month strategy centered on policy and collaborative opportunities, indicating a desire to work together to effectuate change. Participants conveyed a need to enact local healthy homes ordinances or a statewide healthy homes law. Suggested components of healthy homes legislation included: criminalizing slumlords, strengthening existing codes, and increasing the involvement of community-based organizations in healthy homes issues. In addition, participants identified a need for funding a large education and outreach campaign that includes television announcements and community training. Other key actions to include addressing smoking, pests (via integrated pest management), asthma, and weatherization. Although three months would seem unrealistic for several of these ideas, the aggressive timeline suggests that participants saw these items as very near-term strategic priorities.

**One-Year Strategy:** Participants' strategies to implement over one year include expanding outreach and education to community members, medical professionals, and students via a curriculum for high school and college levels. Policy changes include a desire to have proactive code enforcement, to ban sprays/bombs for pests, to outlaw unhealthy building materials, and to have a plan developed for the region. Funding of innovative IPM and asthma projects and the collection of data were also seen as first-year priorities.

**Three-to-Five Year Strategy:** The group envisioned a true statewide healthy homes collaborative involving a myriad of agencies. California would have a Statewide Healthy Homes statute and would lead the nation in green, affordable, and healthy housing. Housing inspections would include close collaboration with community-based organizations. Integrated pest management would be mainstreamed and mold remediation agencies would be regulated. There was also a desire to see California smokers step outside their homes to smoke. The outcome from all these efforts would be a dramatic reduction of asthma and lead poisoning. The results of our efforts would be well researched and analyzed, prompting the passage of similar policies nationally.

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## Conclusions and Next Steps

While the local symposia varied widely in content and make-up of participants, they were well-received overall and succeeded as catalysts for stakeholders to consider possible strategy and policy directions at the local and state level.

The statewide meeting built on the local meetings and other partnerships and collaborations around the state. Attendees were satisfied with the meeting, and useful next steps emerged for building a stronger statewide healthy housing network.

In addition to the ideas that emerged from the state and local meetings, the group benefited from the excellent research and policy work conducted by CAFA (see Figure 2).

## Possible Eight-Point Action Plan for Strategic Planning and Policy Work

1. Convene the local meeting hosts, state symposia planners and other key stakeholders, including CAFA, RAMP, and NLRC, to plot out next steps for a statewide healthy homes coalition and to further flesh out a statewide Healthy Homes Action Plan.
2. Put together a statewide healthy homes collaborative/coalition:
  - a. Start with phone meetings of people interested in participating in moving the discussion into action.
  - b. Follow up with face-to-face meeting at the end of 2009 or the beginning of 2010.
  - c. Identify funding for continuation.
  - d. Hold another statewide meeting either annually or biennially.
3. Promote successful local strategies for proactive inspection and code enforcement.
4. Disseminate information on model local programs.
5. Pursue statewide requirements for routine inspection of rental units for building code violations.

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**Figure 2.** CAFA Healthy Housing Policy Goals

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1. Moving from complaint-driven to proactive home inspection process such as annual inspections of multi-unit housing.
  2. Enacting and enforcing healthy, affordable housing laws and high levels of penalties for noncompliance, particularly in the case of criminal, repeat violators. These penalties, in turn, can help pay for the stepped-up code enforcement.
  3. Institutionalizing environmental health and asthma training for code enforcers.
  4. Adopting toxics reduction through safe housecleaning and integrated pest management.
  5. Establishing countywide and statewide standards for assessment and remediation of mold complaints.
  6. Promoting healthy housing best practices and the use of state incentives for asthma-friendly affordable housing development and renovation.
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6. Include healthy homes in green building and energy efficiency efforts.
  7. Build healthy housing into affordable housing initiatives, such as the housing trust fund and stimulus-funded housing investments.
  8. Create a high-impact communications campaign focusing on the idea of healthy housing as a human right.

California is poised for statewide action on healthy homes, building on many years of successful local programs, significant governmental infrastructure, and a powerful array of community leaders. Synchronizing solutions at the state will require willingness of localities to continue the dialogue, candid assessments of current programs, a united vision for the future, and financial resources to implement the statewide action plan. There is a unique opportunity to maximize and build upon goodwill between governmental and nongovernmental groups as we move forward.



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# Appendix 1: About the Partners

**Alameda County CLPPP, Oakland** The Alameda County Lead Poisoning Prevention Program (ACLPPP) was founded in 1992. The Program is unique among lead poisoning prevention programs in the U.S. because of its comprehensive multi-disciplinary nature, combining health, housing, and environmental disciplines in one program. Through funding from HUD, ACLPPP has remediated 1,300 low-income residential units for lead and conducted more than 6,500 lead and healthy home evaluations. It has also trained more than 1,350 individuals in lead and healthy homes practices.

**American Lung Association of California** provides assistance for asthmatic families and has programs dedicated to clean air, healthy homes, environmental health, tobacco control/smoking cessation, and air pollution.

**California Breathing** is an asthma program in the Environmental Health Investigations Branch of the California Department of Public Health charged with enhancing implementation of the Strategic Plan for Asthma in California. The program's efforts focus on preventive and public health strategies to diminish the impact of asthma and reduce asthma-related health disparities.

**California Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Branch** is a statewide agency providing resources to eliminate childhood lead poisoning in children. Provides funding, outreach, education, enforcement, surveillance, data management; encourages screening and testing; and oversees case management.

**CA Coalition for Rural Housing** is a State low-income housing coalition that has been serving rural communities since 1976. They provide capacity building for nonprofit and public sectors to provide affordable housing and related facilities.

**California Department of Community Services and Development** is a state department of the California Health and Human Services Agency. Administers federal programs to help low-income families achieve and maintain self-sufficiency, meet their home energy needs, and reside in housing free from the dangers of lead hazards.

**California Institute for Rural Studies** is a nonprofit research organization working toward promoting economic and environmental sustainability to affect social change in rural communities throughout the State. Their current projects include increasing food security for agricultural workers in the Salinas Valley, creating a feasibility study for farmworker vanpool in Napa Valley, and a three-year evaluation of the California Endowment's "Promotora de Salud" program.

**California Rural Legal Assistance** was founded in 1966 as a nonprofit legal services program. Today they offer 40,000 low-income rural Californians with free legal assistance and a variety of community education and outreach programs.

**City of Los Angeles Housing Department**, Lead Hazard Remediation Program provides outreach and educational services to Los Angeles residents regarding lead-based paint hazards, prevention and control, and provides grants to reduce lead-based paint hazards in single and multifamily homes with more than one bedroom.

**City of Sacramento Code Enforcement Department** enforces the local housing code. Among the most notable programs are the rental housing inspection program which preventatively inspects all rental housing in the City and the vacant building ordinance, which ensures that vacant properties are not a nuisance to surrounding neighborhoods.

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**City of San Diego/Lead Safe Neighborhoods Program** connects healthy homes and lead poisoning prevention resources to the community. The program helps families with asthma, provides free outreach and education, and performs enforcement to eliminate lead hazards in housing.

**Coalition for Economic Survival** is a grassroots, multi-racial, multi-ethnic tenants' rights organization serving low- and moderate-income renters throughout the greater Los Angeles area since 1973. CES is committed to organizing tenants to fight to ensure tenants' rights and preserve affordable housing.

**Community Action to Fight Asthma (CAFA)** is a network of California coalitions working to shape local, regional, and state policies to reduce the environmental triggers of asthma for school-aged children where they live, learn, and play.

**Environmental Health Coalition** has responded to community needs in the region for 20 years by empowering citizens through community organization and technical assistance and by developing policies which lead to long-term solutions. It organizes and advocates to protect public health and the environment threatened by toxic pollution.

**Esperanza Community Housing Corporation** is a nonprofit housing developer with a community health promoter program. They have placed over 200 health promoters in community-based health programs and are the lead agency in the Los Angeles Healthy Homes Outreach Project, which is funded through grants from HUD and private foundations.

**Fresno Interdenominational Refugee Ministries (FIRM)** began its work on tenants' rights and habitability in the early 1990s and has since expanded it to include systematic policy change efforts with a focus primarily on the Lao and Hmong populations.

**Healthy Homes Collaborative** is an association of community-based organizations in California committed to eliminating environmental health threats in homes and communities.

**Koreatown Immigrant Worker's Alliance** empowers Koreatown's low-wage immigrant workers to fight for dignity and respect in the workplace and community, and to work together with other communities to realize a vision of a just Los Angeles.

**Los Angeles Community Legal Center** is a grassroots, community-based organization dedicated to promoting the basic human right to just and healthy affordable housing.

**Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Branch** is committed to eliminating elevated blood lead levels in children.

**National Latino Research Center (NLRC) at California State University San Marcos** promotes scientific and applied research, training, and the exchange of information that contribute to the knowledge and understanding of the rapidly growing U.S. Latino population. NLRC is the author of the comprehensive report, *Un-doing the Privilege of Healthy Housing*.

**Proyecto Casas Saludables** seeks to empower the San Diego community by providing education, advocacy, and counseling on housing issues. It seeks to reduce childhood exposure to lead, mold, toxins, and pests that are "triggers" to asthma. Over 130 homes have been inspected in the City Heights community, with residents referred to housing counselors, legal counsel, or to programs that assist with lead removal.

**Rural Community Assistance Corporation (RCAC), Sacramento** is committed to improving the quality of housing, especially in rural communities, on Indian reservations, colonias (rural border communities), and for farm workers.

**HUD's Region IX Office of Healthy Homes and Lead Hazard Control** provides funds to state and local governments to develop cost-effective ways to reduce lead-based paint hazards. In addition, the office enforces HUD's lead-based paint regulations, provides public outreach and technical assistance, and conducts technical studies to help protect children and their families from health and safety hazards in the home.

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**Sacramento County Public Health Department** provides a variety of health services to residents, including health outreach and education.

**The Sacramento Housing Alliance** was created in 1989 to create more affordable housing opportunities in the greater Sacramento region. They provide technical assistance for affordable housing development, advocate for mixed income housing, as well as provide outreach and education to the community regarding affordable housing.

**U.C. Berkeley Center for Children's Environmental Health** is a program under the school's Department of Public Health. It conducts research on the relationship between environmental exposures (including pesticides, lead, and allergens) and children's health. The Center has also developed successful interventions to reduce environmental exposures as well as environmental health education materials for pregnant women.

