

*Breathe Easy at Home :
Partnering Housing Code
Inspectors, Public Health and
Medical Services for Child Health*

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A Far Reaching Collaboration

- City of Boston's Inspectional Services Department
- Boston Medical Center/MLPC
- Boston Public Health Commission
- Boston Urban Asthma Coalition
- Bowdoin St Neighborhood Health Center
- Asthma Regional Council of New England
- Children's Hospital Boston

What is Breathe Easy at Home (BEAH)?

- Doctors or nurses screen for housing problems among asthmatic patients
- Medical professionals log onto a web based referral system
- Refer families for housing code inspection and sign up for updates
- Housing code inspectors put results up on website, automatically emailed to medical staff

Medical Providers Screening

- Boston Public Health Commission got EPA funding to disseminate healthy homes services throughout Boston
- Breathe Easy at Home part of that
- Produced Hand Cards with process to refer and helpful numbers

Medical Providers Log on to Website

- Built the initial website with dollars from Boston Medical Center/MLPC
- Buy in from City staff so that when web platform changed, BEAH came with it
- Medical Sites register, not individuals
- Medical Sites are password protected for HIPAA protections

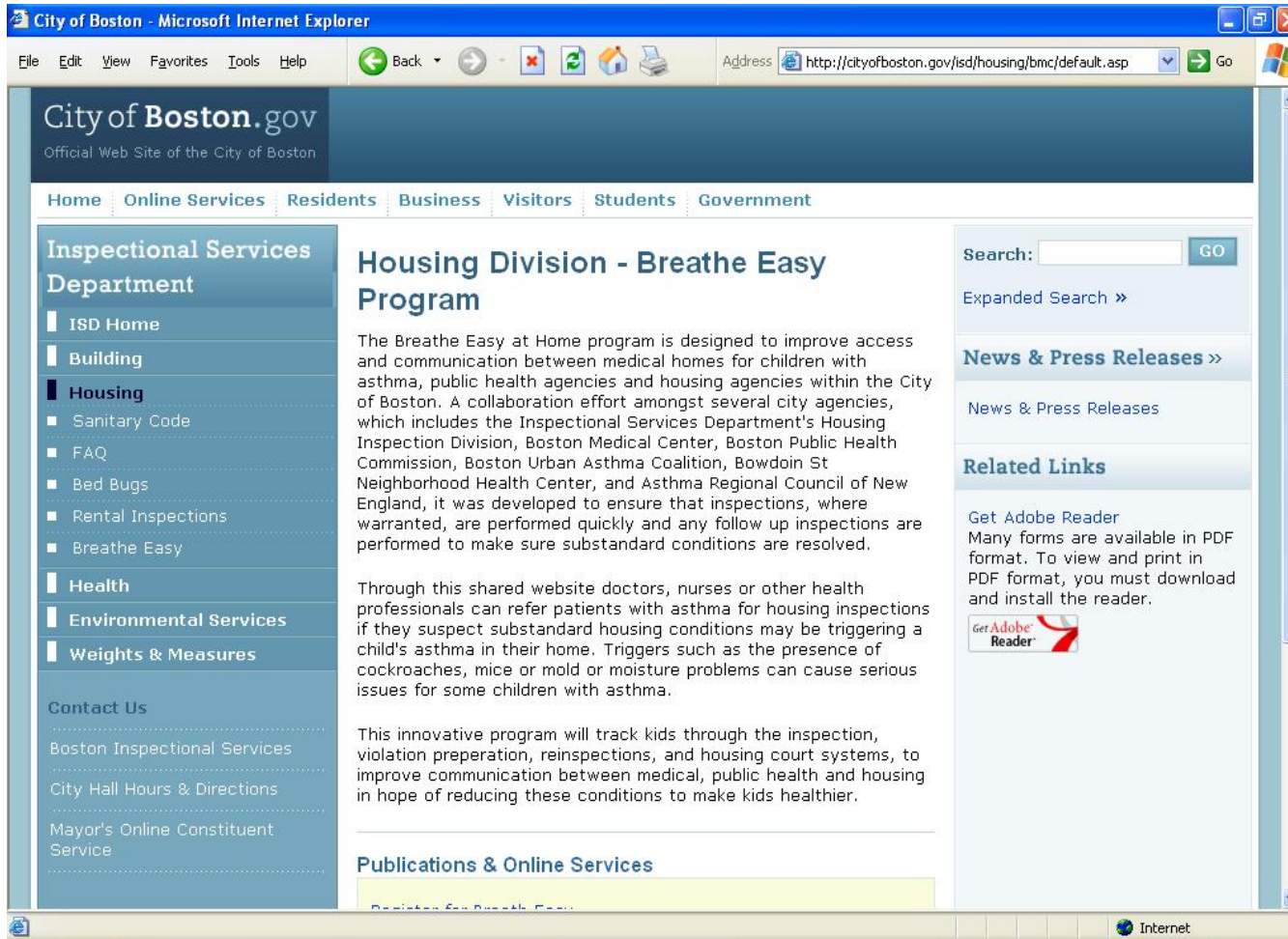
Referred for Housing Code Inspections

- Housing Code in Massachusetts very Asthma Friendly
 - Cockroaches, Mice, Mold
 - Even potential around old carpet, heating
- Enforcement of the code always issue
- Medical Providers like having an option for addressing these issue
- Feedback on how cases are going important to continued referrals

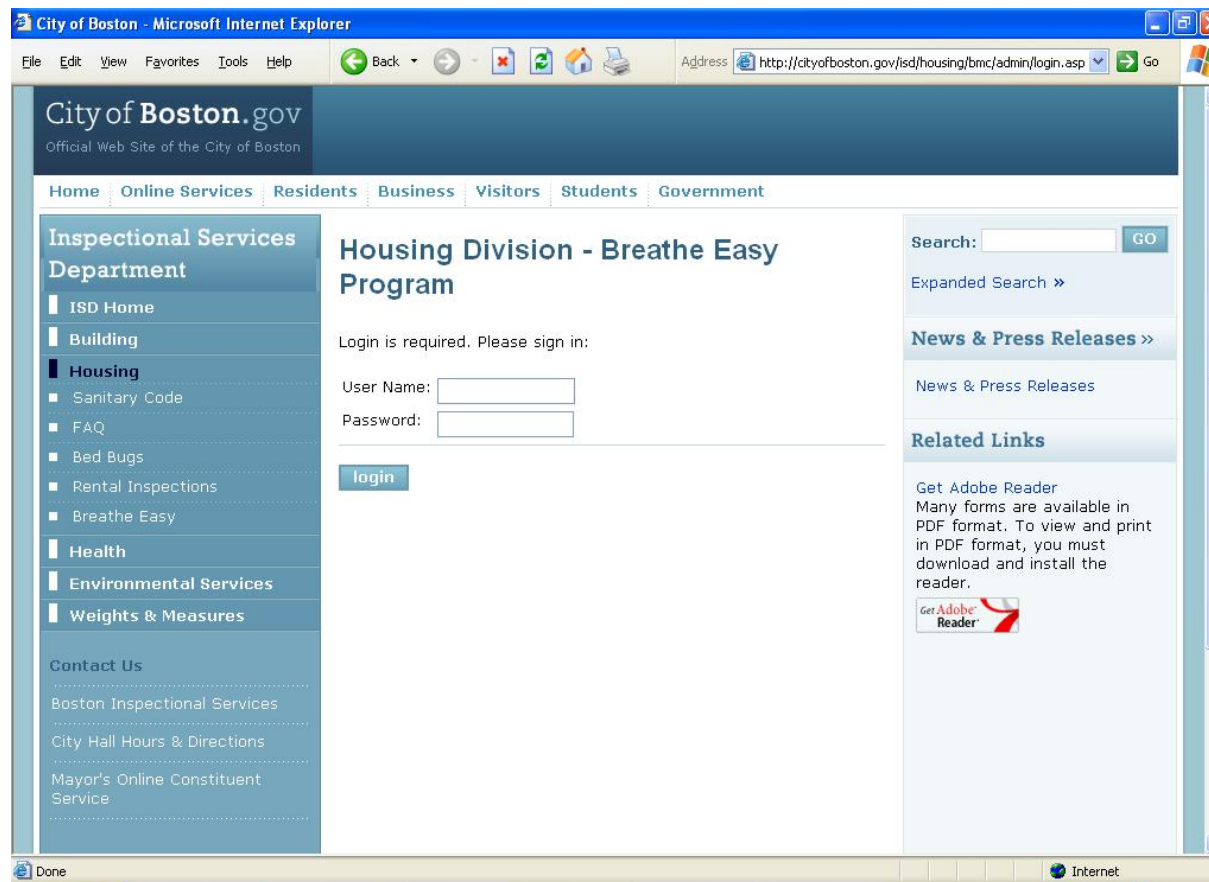
Updates and Follow Through

- Once referred, if homes are found to have violations, landlords are served
- Follow up inspections occur 2-4 weeks typically, but can be shorter
- If violations solved, case is closed
- If they are not, either arbitration or housing court referral made

Home for Website within City Services



LOG IN Information Unique for Each Medical Site Registered



New Case Information Required

City of Boston - Microsoft Internet Explorer

Address: <http://cityofboston.gov/isd/housing/bmc/admin/newcase>

City of Boston.gov
Official Web Site of the City of Boston

Home | Online Services | Residents | Business | Visitors | Students | Government

Inspectional Services Department

- ISD Home
- Building
- Housing
- Breathe Easy**
 - Case List
 - New Case
- Health
- Environmental Services
- Weights & Measures

Contact Us

- Boston Inspectional Services
- City Hall Hours & Directions
- Mayor's Online Constituent Service

City Departments

Select Department

Housing Division - Breathe Easy Program

New Case Referral

Patient Information hide

* Salutation:

* First Name:

Last Name:

* Language:

* Gender:

* Phone (a): Home Cell Other
(primary phone)

Phone (b): Home Cell Other
(alternate phone)

* Under Six? Yes No

Address Information hide

* Address:

* Apartment: Check if single family

Search: GO

Expanded Search >>

News & Press Releases >>

News & Press Releases

Related Links

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Many forms are available in PDF format. To view and print in PDF format, you must download and install the reader.

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Case Referral Information Updated

The screenshot shows a Microsoft Internet Explorer browser window displaying the City of Boston website. The address bar shows the URL: <http://cityofboston.gov/isd/housing/bmc/admin/viewcase>. The page title is "City of Boston - Microsoft Internet Explorer".

The website header includes the City of Boston logo and navigation tabs: Home, Online Services, Residents, Business, Visitors, Students, and Government. The main content area is titled "Housing Division - Breathe Easy Program" and "View Case Referral".

The case information is displayed in several sections:

- Patient Information:** MICHELLE STRAW (617)459-9745. A "show" link is provided to view the patient information.
- Address Information:** 37 - 0 MSGR REYNOLDS WAY, Ward: 09. A "show" link is provided to view the address information.
- Nature of the Problem and Inspection Information:** WAS AN OPEN CSAE, AND NEEDS REOPENED CHILD WITH ASTHMA. A "show" link is provided to view the problem information.
- Referral Information:** A "show" link is provided to view the referral information.

The left sidebar contains navigation links for the Inspectional Services Department, including ISD Home, Building, Housing, Breathe Easy (with sub-links for Case List and New Case), Health, Environmental Services, and Weights & Measures. It also includes a "Contact Us" section with links to Boston Inspectional Services, City Hall Hours & Directions, and Mayor's Online Constituent Service. A "City Departments" dropdown menu is also present.

The right sidebar features a search box, a "GO" button, and links for "Expanded Search", "News & Press Releases", and "Related Links". The "Related Links" section includes a "Get Adobe Reader" button and text explaining that many forms are available in PDF format and require Adobe Reader.

How has the Program been going

- City of Boston invested in a full time coordinator of the program
- 28 Boston health centers registered
- 107 referrals between October 2006 and September 2007
 - 33% just in the last 3 months
 - 70% of cases have violations solved before going to housing court
- New replication opportunities in Worcester MA and other cities

Case Example

- SG is a mother of two children, 4 yo daughter and 15 month old son
- Live in Public Housing
- Apartment infested, water leaking from pipe exposed in wall
- Family living doubled up with grandmother to avoid apartment

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- Apartment infested, water leaking from pipe exposed in wall
- Family living doubled up with grandmother to avoid apartment
- Mom travels an hour each way to job, depressed

Case Example continued

- After referral to Breathe Easy, code inspectors come and write up violations
- BHA Staff close the hole in wall and do Integrated Pest Management After 1 month, violations resolved, case closed
- 4 year old says at the next office visit “I get to sleep in my own bed now”
- Mom gets job closer to home, happier

Secondary Benefits

- Largest Landlord of cases was Boston Housing Authority
- BEAH resulted in conference between housing code inspectors and development managers
- Memo of Understanding around response
- Director of Occupancy attends monthly meetings, available on case consults

Limitations

- Retaliation against families who invite housing code inspectors in is rare, but important consideration
- Website is not always as easy to use as we would like
- Families are agree at clinic and are referred but do not agree at time of inspection

Take Home Messages

- Multi-faceted collaborations are possible to address housing problems
- Technology can be useful tool
- Doctors from Medical Legal Partnerships can be “not the usual suspect” in advocating for policy change
- Linking housing, public health and medical is only way to address environmental problems in asthma