Healthy housing is affordable, safe, and supportive

A healthy home is one where the physical, mental, and socioeconomic environment supports the well-being of household members. It is free from hazards like pests or structural deficiencies. It does not impose a cost burden, ensuring household income can be spent on other needs such as food and healthcare.

It should be possible for every East King County resident to live in a healthy home.

Healthy housing is critical to well-being

Research shows that affordable, healthy homes are positively correlated to physical and psychological well being.

- Poor housing quality is the most consistent and strongest predictor of emotional and behavioral problems in children and youth.
- Households who spend less on housing are less likely to experience residential instability, which is associated with reduced mental and physical health outcomes.
- Residential exposures are major contributing factors to serious illnesses.
Impacts of healthy housing barriers in East King County

HUD’s defined housing problems include overcrowding, inadequate plumbing, inadequate kitchen facilities, and cost-burden. The National Healthy Housing Standard (NHH) builds on these to include structural integrity, safety & security, heating & energy, moisture, waste, pest management and chemical agents.

- 4 injuries at home account for 4 million emergency department visits and 70,000 hospital admissions nationwide.
- 40% of childhood asthma cases are attributable to residential exposures.
- $2,584 annual expenses for asthma-related treatments per household.
- 4.3 million days of lost productivity due to asthma in Washington adults (11,717 persons).
- $5,600 1 year of medical & special education for a seriously lead-poisoned child.

Barriers to Healthy Housing

- 3 in 10 households in East King County are cost burdened.
- Families who spend less of their income on housing spend more on food and healthcare.
- The presence of pests can increase the risk of hospitalization by up to 3x.
- East King County households are overcrowded.
- Overcrowding is linked to higher rates of infectious disease transmission.
- Malfunctioning or poorly maintained HVAC systems pose safety and health risks including fire and exposure to carbon monoxide.

- 1,680 East King County households have inadequate kitchen or plumbing facilities.
- 45% of East King County households have a risk of lead exposure.
- Lead at any level has toxic effects on the nervous system and cognitive development, especially in children.

Updated March 2017.

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