

Insights: Publications

Invisible threats: Legal methods to address asthma triggers in rental homes (book chapter)

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Federal housing laws dictate certain fundamental rights for tenants living in federally subsidized housing. Most state jurisdictions acknowledge a tacit "implied warranty of habitability" provision in residential lease agreements, which enforces the duty of landlords to fix defects on properties to ensure that rented living spaces are habitable for tenants and comply with local housing codes. Yet these legal baseline standards have not effectively secured healthy and safe living conditions for low-income, minority families. Environmental health hazards found in substandard housing, such as mold, lead, dust mites, and rodents serve as asthmatic triggers for children. When these health risks are eventually identified as triggers for their child's ill health, parents may still forgo opportunities to confront their landlord for fear of retribution in the form of increased rent, penalties, or eviction. The scope of this project is to develop a resource that would facilitate a "know your rights" education for vulnerable families, offering guidance on how to negotiate with landlords for better housing conditions. The primary goal is to create an educational legal worksheet for families renting substandard housing and to guide them in seeking resources and relief to improve their living environment. This project strives to empower families by developing a resource that raises awareness, facilitates making housing rights more accessible, and highlights legal tools to help address asthmatic triggers within the home, thereby improving the health of vulnerable children.