

# The Impact of Mold on Red Hook NYCHA Tenants

A Health Crisis in Public Housing

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# Acknowledgements

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# Who We Are

## Red Hook Initiative (RHI)

RHI is non-profit organization serving the community of Red Hook in Brooklyn, New York. RHI believes that social change to overcome systemic inequities begins with empowered youth. In partnership with community adults, we nurture young people in Red Hook to be inspired, resilient, and healthy, and to envision themselves as co-creators of their lives, community and society.

We envision a Red Hook where all young people can pursue their dreams and grow into independent adults who contribute to their families and community.



## Turning the Tide: A Community-Based Collaborative

RHI is a member of Turning the Tide (T3), a community-based collaborative, led by Fifth Avenue Committee and including Families United for Racial and Economic Equality, and Southwest Brooklyn Industrial Development Corporation. T3 is focused on engaging and empowering South Brooklyn public housing residents in the climate change movement to ensure that the unprecedented public and private-investments for NYCHA capital improvements meet the real and pressing needs of residents.

T3 will continue to work to address mold and environmental remediation projects in Red Hook and Gowanus and to help inform and influence climate policy impacting NYC low-income residents and ensure that public investments advance equity and meet resident needs.





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# Executive Summary

## A Call For Action

From March through August of 2016, the Red Hook Initiative (RHI) came together with Red Hook residents, through Participatory Action Research, to explore the impact of mold on tenants of the Red Hook Houses of the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA). The decision to develop a survey on NYCHA residents' experience with mold in their homes came from an urgent community call for action. Red Hook NYCHA tenants have suffered from the health hazards associated with mold for years with no respite despite similar findings in the past, including the [2009 Red Hook Community Health survey](#) and the [2014 Weathering the Storm: Rebuilding a More Resilient NYCHA post-Sandy](#). While Hurricane Sandy exacerbated mold problems in deteriorating NYCHA buildings, exposure to mold and its harmful effect on health have plagued residents in Red Hook Houses for years. Mold is contributing to a public health crisis.

Four years after Hurricane Sandy, Red Hook residents continue to suffer from a crisis that existed before the storm and continues today. Research shows that long-term exposure to mold can make healthy people sick.<sup>1</sup> The outcomes of our survey demonstrate a public health crisis for Red Hook residents and the need for a comprehensive response.

## Findings

### 1. **Mold and leaks are rampant in Red Hook NYCHA apartments and cause extensive damage.**

Damage from leaks and mold was reported to interrupt daily living for tenants and in many ways made their apartments difficult to occupy.

### 2. **Mold has a severe impact on individual and family health, especially for children.**

Residents reported mold problems contributing to high levels of stress. According to those surveyed children are particularly vulnerable to illness caused by mold.

### 3. **Tenants DO reach out for help but find NYCHA to be unresponsive.**

Of those who reported their mold condition to NYCHA, only 59% received a response, and less than 16% of those yielded a positive outcome and relief from mold through the assistance of NYCHA.

1. Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academies. "Report Brief: Damp Indoor Spaces and Health." May 2004. [www.nationalacademies.org/hmd/~/media/Files/Report%20Files/2004/Damp-Indoor-Spaces-and-Health/dampindoor2pagerforPDF.pdf](http://www.nationalacademies.org/hmd/~/media/Files/Report%20Files/2004/Damp-Indoor-Spaces-and-Health/dampindoor2pagerforPDF.pdf).

## Recommendations

### 1. **Immediately improve the process for residents seeking mold-related repairs.**

NYCHA should establish and adhere to a clear timeline from the time a tenant reports a mold problem until the time of inspection and should take preventative measures to assess mold in all NYCHA developments, before problems are reported.

### 2. **Address gaps in Baez v. NYCHA enforcement.**

In the immediate, NYCHA should train NYCHA staff in Red Hook on reasonable accommodations requests and Baez v. NYCHA outcomes. Management offices are giving out incorrect information to residents about reasonable accommodations requests for mold and asthma conditions.

### 3. **Determine the cost of addressing Red Hook's mold crisis and define the commitment of multiple stakeholders in a long term solution for residents.**

RHI calls on multiple stakeholders to address the mold crisis in public housing.

## Conclusion

We are seeking an improved process for mold related repairs and a strengthening of the enforcements made through the Baez v. NYCHA settlement. In addition to demands for NYCHA, Red Hook Initiative calls on multiple stakeholders to respond. Through a collective effort, we are calling on several New York City decision makers to prioritize the issue of mold in public housing and commit to a comprehensive solution.

# Mold: An Ongoing Problem

From March through August of 2016, the Red Hook Initiative (RHI) came together with Red Hook residents to explore the impact of mold on tenants of the Red Hook Houses of the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA).

The decision to develop a survey on NYCHA residents' experience with mold in their homes came from an urgent community call for action. In 2009 RHI partnered with a team of graduate students from Hunter College to develop a report on the health of Red Hook residents. The [Red Hook Community Health Assessment](#) found 40% of respondents at some point had mold in their apartments. Of those who claimed they have asthma, 33% had mold in their apartments. The report also found disproportionate rates of asthma in public housing as compared to private homes in the 11231 zip code.

The issue of mold resurfaced after Hurricane Sandy. In 2014, Alliance for a Just Rebuilding (a coalition of community-based, environmental and faith-based organizations including RHI) published "[Weathering the Storm: Rebuilding a More Resilient NYCHA post-Sandy](#)." The report found mold to be a major problem even before Sandy, made worse by the storm. The authors offered practical solutions for NYCHA to deal with its mold crisis.

Prior to the launch of the survey, RHI partnered with New York Lawyers for the Public Interest to bring resources to residents with mold and asthma. In conversations with NYCHA tenants at community meetings, residents revealed that mold continued to be a significant issue and that lack of adequate response from NYCHA had led to frustrations and lack of reporting.

In order to further understand the extent of the mold issue -- including whether residents were reporting the issue, and NYCHA's response -- RHI assembled a team of residents in March of 2016 to work in partnership with staff researchers through Participatory Action Research (PAR). PAR builds community capacity by putting the people most impacted by a problem in a position to conduct research. PAR starts with a research topic that is important to the community with the goal of tapping into local knowledge and lived experiences to improve community health.<sup>2</sup>

Many members of the PAR team have mold in their apartments, or have had it in the past. The team used their direct experiences to help shape the survey, analyze the results, and develop recommendations. Three community input meetings between March and September brought nearly 150 residents together to inform and ground our analysis and recommendations.

2. Policy Link. "Promoting Healthy Public Policy through Community-Based Participatory Research" (2008) [www.policylink.org/sites/default/files/CBPR\\_PromotingHealthyPublicPolicy\\_final.pdf](http://www.policylink.org/sites/default/files/CBPR_PromotingHealthyPublicPolicy_final.pdf)



# The Housing Health Crisis

## Mold: Whose responsibility?

Mildew and molds are fungi - simple microscopic organisms that thrive anywhere there is a moist environment.<sup>3</sup> All molds have the potential to cause negative health effects as molds produce allergens, irritants, and in some cases, toxins that may cause harmful reactions.<sup>4</sup>

There is growing consensus on the harmful health impacts of mold. This is evident in the wave of legislation that have passed in recent years.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, health departments in all 50 states in the United States have information on their website referring to mold as a health hazard.<sup>6</sup> Despite the acknowledgement of mold contributing to health problems, the majority of regulations fall short of addressing the gravity of mold as a serious public health concern.

In New York City, laws and regulations fall short of delivering true protection from mold for New Yorkers. While there are no federal laws on mold, neither for acceptable levels of exposure or building/rental standards nor any determinations regarding exposure limits in New York State under the *Warranty of Habitability* provision of the New York State Law, every New York tenant has the right to a “livable, safe and sanitary apartment”.<sup>7</sup> According to the New York City government’s website, “It is your landlord’s responsibility to fix a mold problem in your apartment”.<sup>8</sup> Additionally,

New York City’s Housing Preservation and Development Department (HPD) assigns mold growths as “C” class -an immediately hazardous violation.<sup>9</sup> However, NYCHA is not subject to HPD inspection or regulation.

Section 1384 of the New York State (NYS) Public Health Law established the NYS Toxic Mold Task Force in 2005 to investigate the relationship between health and mold exposure. Their 2010 report found “Exposure to building dampness and dampness-related agents including mold has been recognized nationally and at the state and local level as a potential public health problem. The strongest evidence exists for associations between indoor mold exposures and upper and lower respiratory health effects such as nasal symptoms and asthma exacerbations.”

In 2015, largely in response to Hurricane Sandy, the New York State legislature passed a law to require licensure of contractors performing mold remediation and abatement. The purpose of this law was to address the rampant abuse by mold contractors who in the aftermath of Sandy either overcharged for their services or were unqualified to perform mold remediation and abatement. The law, however, largely leaves out protection for renters and NYCHA residents, as full-time employees of landlords and the housing authority are exempt from certification requirements.

3. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). “Mold & Mildew: Cleaning Up Your Flood Damaged Home”. July 2007. [www.fema.gov/media-library-data/20130726-1622-20490-4869/fema\\_606.pdf](http://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/20130726-1622-20490-4869/fema_606.pdf)

4. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). “Mold remediation in Schools and Commercial Buildings”. September 2008.

[www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2014-08/documents/moldremediation.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2014-08/documents/moldremediation.pdf)

5. Traci S. Lagasse and Kristen Reyna. “30 States and Counting: Mold Legislation Continues to Sweep the Nation”. February 2004. [ag.purdue.edu/extension/eden/Mold\\_Legislation.pdf](http://ag.purdue.edu/extension/eden/Mold_Legislation.pdf)

6. Public Advocate Betsy Gotbaum. “UNHEALTHY EXPOSURE: MOLD IN NEW YORK CITY HOMES”. December 2006.

[weact.nyc.gov/Portals/7/Unhealthy%20Exposure%20-%20Mold%20in%20NYC%20Homes.pdf](http://weact.nyc.gov/Portals/7/Unhealthy%20Exposure%20-%20Mold%20in%20NYC%20Homes.pdf)

7. Eric. T. Schneiderman, Attorney General. “Tenant’s Rights Guide.”

[www.ag.ny.gov/sites/default/files/pdfs/publications/Tenants](http://www.ag.ny.gov/sites/default/files/pdfs/publications/Tenants)

8. City of New York. “How do I report mold in my apartment?” Accessed October 25, 2016.

[www1.nyc.gov/nyc-resources/faq/461/how-do-i-report-mold-in-my-apartmentRights.pdf](http://www1.nyc.gov/nyc-resources/faq/461/how-do-i-report-mold-in-my-apartmentRights.pdf)

9. Metropolitan Council on Housing. “Mold in Your Apartment.” Accessed October 25, 2016. [metcouncilonhousing.org/help\\_and\\_answers/mold](http://metcouncilonhousing.org/help_and_answers/mold)

## Mold Makes Everyone Sick

Mold exposure can cause headaches, sinus congestion, shortness of breath, skin irritation, permanent respiratory problems, chronic fatigue syndrome, and in rare cases, central nervous system problems (loss of balance and difficulty speaking).<sup>10</sup>

In vulnerable populations, a relatively small number of mold spores can cause health problems. People vulnerable to mold include infants and children, the elderly, immune-compromised patients, pregnant women, individuals with asthma and other existing respiratory conditions.<sup>11</sup> Long-term exposure to mold can make healthy people sick.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to aggravating conditions associated with asthma, studies have established that mold exposure can be a contributing factor in the development of asthma. Exposure to large quantities of any kind of indoor mold during a baby's first year of life has been demonstrated to increase the risk of asthma.<sup>13</sup>

## Baez v. NYCHA

In 2013, a tenant's advocacy group including the South Bronx Churches, Manhattan Together, and a number of individual tenants notified NYCHA of their intent to file a class-action suit with the support of National Center for Law and Economic Justice and the Natural Resources Defense Council, *Baez v. NYCHA*, citing years of communications and complaints citing

the recognition of health problems relating to excessive moisture and mold for tenants with asthma. The case was settled in December 2013. The federal court approved the settlement in April 2014. Under the settlement, NYCHA residents have the right to:

1. Effective, safe abatement of mold and the excess moisture which often causes it.
2. Have NYCHA complete a simple repair for mold and moisture within:
  - **SEVEN** days, on average, for simple repairs or
  - **FIFTEEN** days, on average, for more complex repairs
3. Have NYCHA do capital improvements, if needed for the work.
4. Have NYCHA contact tenants within 60 days, to determine if the work was successful.
5. If mold and moisture are still present, have NYCHA come back to fix the problem.

Tenants with asthma and other health related conditions are instructed to file reasonable accommodations requests to NYCHA in writing and to provide a letter from their doctor.

The Baez settlement has implications not only for tenants with asthma but for NYCHA's overall policies regarding mold.

10. "New York State Toxic Mold Task Force: Final Report to the Governor and Legislature", December 2010.

11. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). "Mold & Mildew: Cleaning Up Your Flood Damaged Home". July 2007. [www.fema.gov/media-library-data/20130726-1622-20490-4869/fema\\_606.pdf](http://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/20130726-1622-20490-4869/fema_606.pdf)

12. Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academies. "Report Brief: Damp Indoor Spaces and Health." May 2004. [www.nationalacademies.org/hmd/~/media/Files/Report%20Files/2004/Damp-Indoor-Spaces-and-Health/dampindoor2pagerforPDF.pdf](http://www.nationalacademies.org/hmd/~/media/Files/Report%20Files/2004/Damp-Indoor-Spaces-and-Health/dampindoor2pagerforPDF.pdf)

13. Public Advocate Betsy Gotbaum. "UNHEALTHY EXPOSURE: MOLD IN NEW YORK CITY HOMES". December 2006. [weact.nyc/Portals/7/Unhealthy%20Exposure%20-%20Mold%20in%20NYC%20Homes.pdf](http://weact.nyc/Portals/7/Unhealthy%20Exposure%20-%20Mold%20in%20NYC%20Homes.pdf)

## **Next Generation NYCHA**

NYCHA's Next Generation plan includes the need to implement a "comprehensive mold response initiative" but does not include a timeline for reaching further developments or an improved system for residents currently reporting mold issues. While Red Hook Initiative supports Next Generation's mold priorities, we are calling for a clear timeline and system of feedback and oversight for residents.

## **FEMA Funding & Current Design Plans**

Our survey results of extreme mold conditions in the NYCHA Red Hook Houses comes as Red Hook East and West Houses are slated to receive \$438 million in FEMA funding for Sandy related damage and repairs. Current design plans, although not finalized, do not include specific remediation of mold conditions but does include full roof replacement for damaged buildings in both Red Hook West and East as well as repairs and restoration of architectural features (walls, floors) of common areas damaged by flooding.

# Red Hook Houses: Who's at risk?

Mold is bad for everybody but vulnerable populations are most at risk. In the Red Hook Houses approximately 10% of residents are 65 years or older.<sup>14</sup> The 2009 Red Hook Community Health Assessment found that more than a quarter of residents suffer from asthma, much higher than Northwest Brooklyn and New York City rates of 8% and 5%, respectively. This finding has been supported with other studies that show higher asthma rates for children with asthma (1 in 4) in low-income neighborhoods in NYC compared to the city average.<sup>15</sup>

## Survey Demographics

We surveyed 280 NYCHA tenants in the Red Hook East and West Houses.

### Age

- Ranged from 18 to over 75 years old.

### Language

- 93% of people surveyed were primarily English-speaking

### Household composition

- Almost half of those surveyed live with a minor, a child under the age of 18 years (48%)
- 30% reported living with a senior, a person 65 years or older

### Health:

- 45% reported at least one member of the family suffering from a respiratory illness
  - asthma (23%),
  - bronchitis (12%),
  - sinusitis (8%)
  - chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (2%)
- 27% reported suffering from allergies.

14. US Census 2010

15. Elizabeth Foydel. Columbia Spectator. "Columbia Study Explores Asthma Triggers, Neighborhood Disparities." [columbiaspectator.com/2010/04/26/columbia-study-explores-asthma-triggers-neighborhood-disparities](http://columbiaspectator.com/2010/04/26/columbia-study-explores-asthma-triggers-neighborhood-disparities)

# Survey Findings

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## 1. Mold and leaks are rampant in Red Hook NYCHA apartments and cause extensive damage.

Most survey respondents (~ 75%) stated that they knew how to identify mold in their apartments, describing it as a black, green, grey or brown circular growth with a strong odor. Damage from leaks and mold was reported to interrupt daily living for tenants and in many ways made their apartments difficult to occupy.

- Out of 280 respondents, 40% said they currently have mold and 94% have had leaks and mold in the past.
- Approximately 50% of respondents with mold currently report it in their bathrooms. Survey respondents also identified mold in their kitchens, bedrooms, along their ceilings and windows, and even closets.
- 27% said that personal belongings including furniture (beds and couches), appliances, clothing and cabinets had been damaged by leaks and mold.

*“water bubbled up behind the walls”*  
*“a kitchen wall is exposed with mold behind it”*  
- NYCHA Residents

## Case Example

# NYCHA's Response

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Mayra moved into her first floor apartment at 80 Dwight St. in Red Hook in December of 2012, two months after Hurricane Sandy. Mayra had waited three years for an apartment in NYCHA and quickly accepted her placement in Red Hook because of the apartment's affordability and space for her family.

Mayra first noticed mold forming on her walls in August of 2014. She called the NYCHA maintenance number and NYCHA responded two weeks later by cleaning the mold with a spray bottle and wiping it down.

The mold returned in December of 2014 along with a roach infestation. NYCHA responded by cleaning and spraying down the mold on her walls. The mold conditions spread to almost every room of her apartment: living room, bedroom, children's room, and bathroom.

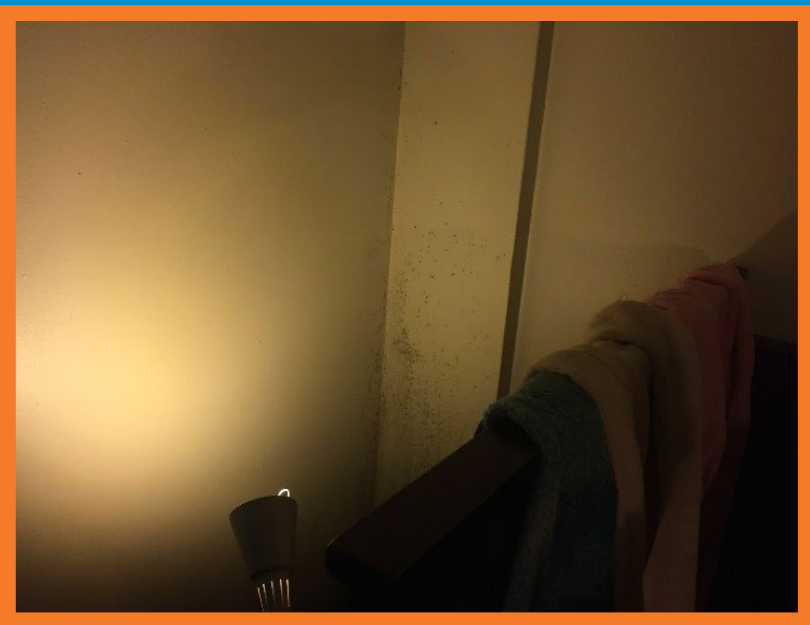
Since moving into her apartment, all four of Mayra's children - ages 11, 6 year old twins, and 14 months - have been diagnosed with asthma and have been to repeated doctor's visits. Mayra's daughter recently was treated for pneumonia. Mayra mentioned her children's asthma in every request and ticket to NYCHA.

The mold returned again in March of 2015, and when NYCHA failed to respond to the ticket request, Mayra filed a Housing Part (HP) action against NYCHA. At this time she also filed a Reasonable Accommodations Request for the asthma conditions of her four children. The management office in Red Hook responded by stating that mold is not an acceptable reason to file for an Accommodations Request. Mayra took her request to 250 Broadway and was approved, but NYCHA never followed up.

NYCHA's response to the HP action was to clean the mold and paint. The mold returned three months later. Since her first HP case, Mayra filed a second HP action for her ongoing mold and roach issues. Mayra has never missed or been late on a rent payment to NYCHA.



**The management office in Red Hook responded by stating that mold is not an acceptable reason to file for an Accommodations Request.**



## 2. Mold has a severe impact on individual and family health, especially for children.

When asked about how mold has impacted them, 54% of residents identified mold and leaks as negatively affecting their health (including the health of loved ones living with them in the apartment). Residents reported mold problems contributing to high levels of stress. According to those surveyed children are particularly vulnerable to illness caused by mold.

*"They found mold during a skin test on my 8 year old son"*

*"It is impacting my daughter's health."*

*"Children in our household under age of six are constantly sick."*

*- NYCHA Residents*

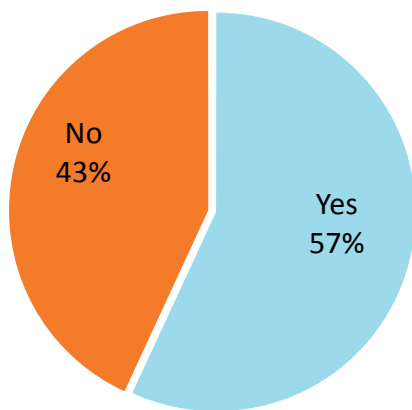


### 3. Tenants DO reach out for help but find NYCHA to be unresponsive.

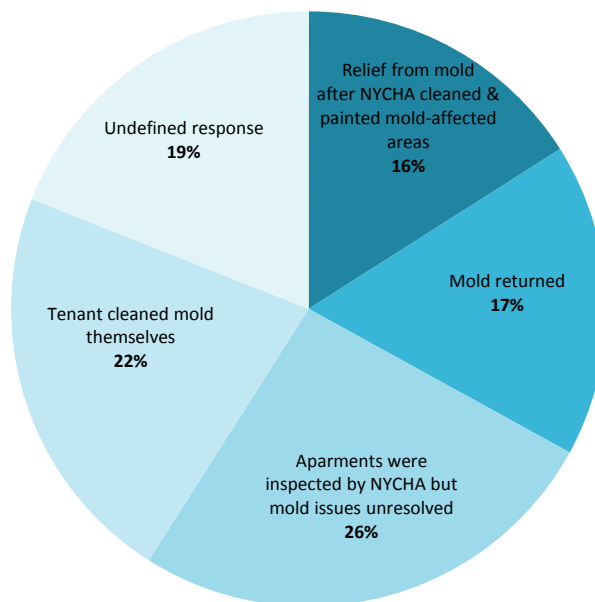
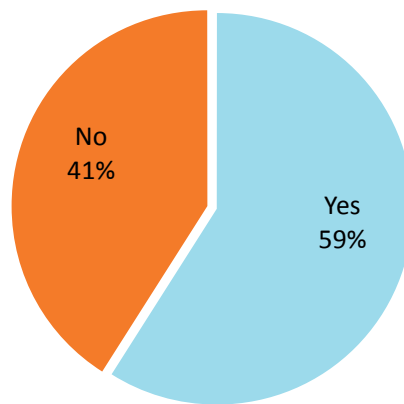
Over the past year, more than half (57%) of those surveyed reported mold to NYCHA authorities. Of those who reported their mold condition to NYCHA, only 59% received a response, and less than 16% of those yielded a positive outcome and relief from mold through the assistance of NYCHA. 39% of tenants surveyed said that they did not believe NYCHA would fix their concerns based on their past experiences and do not believe that they will be heard. Out of 280 respondents, 40% said they currently have mold and 94% have had leaks and mold in the past.

Contacting NYCHA: Survey Responses	
I called the NYCHA 777 Hotline	24%
I put a ticket with my housing assistant	23%
I told a NYCHA maintenance staff member	14%
I told my housing assistant but didn't out in a ticket	8%
I mentioned my medical issue to NYCHA when I said I needed the mold removed	7%
I told someone in the Tenant's Association	6%
I filed an HPD order with the Housing Court at the Justice Center (RHCJC)	5%
I reported it online	4%
Other	9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

**“I have reported my mold issues to NYCHA within the past year”**



**“I have received a response to my report from NYCHA within the last year.”**



**Outcomes: Responses from NYCHA**

#### 4. Residents of Red Hook East and West Houses are not accessing benefits of the Baez vs. NYCHA hearing.

Survey findings reveal that despite 54% of residents identifying mold and leaks as affecting their health and 45% of those responding to the survey reported having respiratory issues like asthma, only 7% of those who responded mentioned their health issues to NYCHA when asking for the mold to be removed. Additionally, narrative reports at community input meetings reveal that residents have reached out to management offices to file requests but are told that reasonable accommodations requests are unavailable for use with asthma and mold.

*"I guess they don't take it seriously."  
"There's no point, they never help anyway."  
- NYCHA Residents*

## Case Example

# A Family's Experience

Ileana Heras lives in NYCHA Red Hook East with her son and daughter and her two grandchildren. Ileana and her family moved into their apartment in 2006 and has had conditions of mold in the bathroom for nearly 10 years. She first reported the mold a few months after moving into her apartment when the mold appeared. When NYCHA responded, the first maintenance person came to scrape the mold and instructed her to open another ticket for the plastering. This began years of a back and forth battle with NYCHA, a series of complaints and opened and closed tickets.

“Each time I called to get the mold fixed, NYCHA responds by wiping it down, painting over and plastering. Nothing further was done. We have to wait for months at a time in between each repair, between the painting and the plastering, and then the mold returns.”

The bathtub is constantly clogged and water reaches the top of the tub. Ileana has put in emergency tickets and no one responds. When someone arrived finally to fix it, the pipe burst and caused a leak in the entire building wall.





“We have to wait for months at a time in between each repair, between the painting and the plastering, and then the mold returns.”

NYCHA came to knock down the wall from the kitchen to the bathroom and before any plumbing was done they had to clean asbestos from the pipes. Ileana and her family were never moved from the apartment. Ileana's daughter Kristen was in the apartment with her children the day of the repair.

After they cleaned the asbestos the plumbers came to fix the plumbing and get the water back on. After the plumbing was completed over three weeks ago, the hole was left in the wall with a piece of plaster over it. At this time NYCHA also came to respond to the mold and mildew and no one ever returned.

All of Ileana's kitchen cabinets have fallen off the walls due to the leaks coming from upstairs over six months ago and still have not been replaced. “When I call to file a ticket they tell me they will call back but the ticket date is always six months later. They haven't given a date for any of the repairs. When they reach out to the housing office they were told that they would be called to tell them when to be home. “

Currently Ileana and her family are living with extreme mold in the bathroom, no cabinets, no light in the bathroom, a hole in the kitchen wall, and ongoing mold and plastering issues.

# Recommendations

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Through community meetings and PAR team analysis, RHI has been in conversation with residents about what NYCHA tenants in Red Hook need and deserve in relation to mold conditions.

Current recommendations are focused on transparency of funding and remediation processes, accountability of NYCHA, and a clear long term solution for Red Hook residents. As mentioned previously, NextGen NYCHA plans should incorporate an improved process for immediately reporting mold and a timeline and cost analysis for treating the underlying issue of mold.

## **1. Immediately improve the process for residents seeking mold-related repairs.**

NYCHA must work with Red Hook residents to input an improved process for residents seeking mold related repairs. This process should include a system of oversight and a transparent process for residents to track progress and provide feedback.

As recommended in the 2013 Weathering the Storm report, NYCHA should create a mechanism for clear oversight and opportunities for input to senior NYCHA management about the mold problem in their apartments and buildings. This could include town hall meetings or surveys of residents. NYCHA should establish and adhere to a clear timeline from the time a tenant reports a mold problem until the time of inspection and should take preventative measures to assess mold in all NYCHA developments, before problems are reported.

## **2. Address gaps in Baez v. NYCHA enforcement.**

RHI recommends a strengthening of the Baez v. NYCHA enforcement and that NYCHA immediately address gaps in reasonable accommodations process in Red Hook.

In 2015, the attorneys for the plaintiffs in the Baez case took NYCHA back to court, for failure to fully comply with the court-approved settlement. The court agreed with the plaintiffs and appointed a Special Master to oversee NYCHA's compliance with the settlement. The attorneys for both sides have been meeting with the Special Master throughout 2016, to develop guidelines for more timely and effective remediation of mold conditions in NYCHA apartments.

RHI supports the appointment of the Special Master in overseeing NYCHA's compliance and will assist the Special Master in connecting with residents and highlighting challenges in Red Hook. In the immediate, NYCHA should train staff in Red Hook on reasonable accommodations requests and Baez v. NYCHA outcomes. Management offices are giving out incorrect information to residents about reasonable accommodations requests for mold and asthma conditions. Residents should also receive an update on progress of Baez enforcement and an opportunity to provide feedback.

## **3. Determine the cost of addressing Red Hook's mold crisis and commitment of multiple stakeholders in a long term solution for residents.**

NYCHA should release capital improvements needed and cost estimates for full mold remediation of Red Hook East and West. NYCHA should clarify budget items available for mold abatement. With access to an estimate of costs associated with full repairs, NYCHA residents and Red Hook Initiative will advocate for allocation of funds to NYCHA to provide safe and habitable living conditions for Red Hook residents.

In addition to a commitment from NYCHA, RHI calls on multiple stakeholders to address the mold crisis in public housing. As evident in the Baez settlement and the Weathering the Storm report, this crisis is far reaching and requires a large scale response.





# Conclusion

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Hurricane Sandy exposed existing vulnerabilities exacerbated by the storm. Sandy revealed widespread conditions of mold affecting residents health and leading to at times fatal respiratory illnesses. For Red Hook residents, the emergency of Sandy revealed an existing crisis to which there has never been an adequate response.

The survey results outlined in this report speak to the magnitude of the mold issue in Red Hook, residents' attempts at getting help, and an ineffective response from NYCHA. Four years after Sandy, as Red Hook is set to receive \$438 million in FEMA funds, a community microgrid, and is the subject of a \$100 million Integrated Flood Protection Study system, the solution for residents with mold remains unclear. NYCHA's Next Generation plan includes creating healthy indoor environments and eliminating roof, facade, and plumbing leaks but leaves out a timeline for the work to reach Red Hook and a comprehensive analysis of cost.

We are seeking an improved process for mold related repairs and a strengthening of the enforcements made through the Baez v. NYCHA settlement. In addition to demands for NYCHA, Red Hook Initiative calls on multiple stakeholders to respond. We recognize that this issue affects the broader public housing community and not only Red Hook. Through a collective effort, we are calling on several New York City decision makers to prioritize the issue of mold in public housing and commit to a comprehensive solution.

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