

# Health Disparities in the Medi-Cal Population

## Childhood Asthma Emergency Department Visits



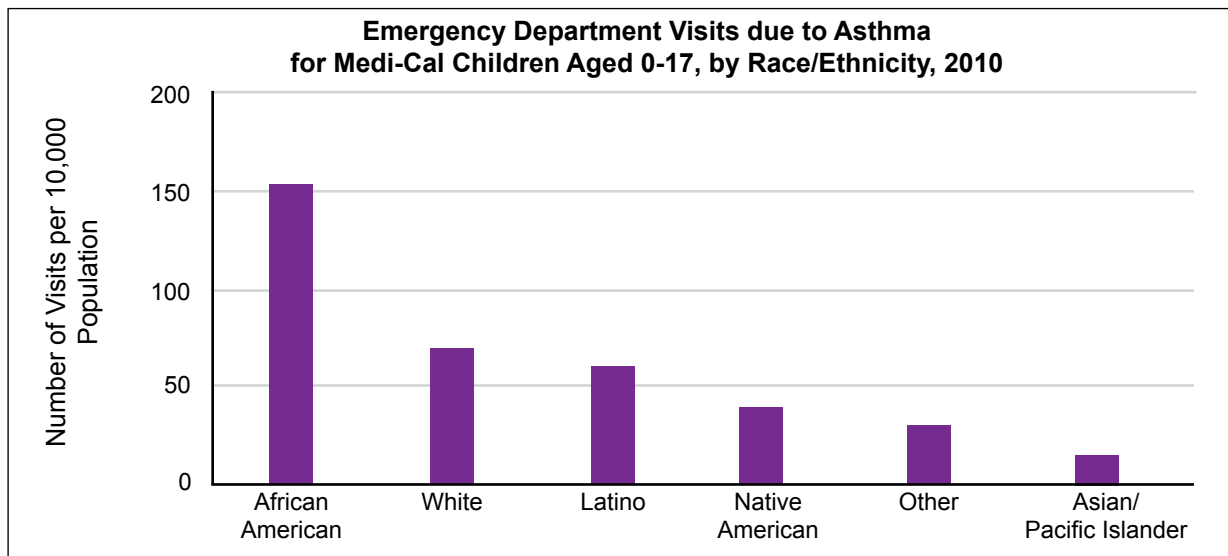
Asthma is the most prevalent condition among infants and children up to age 17.<sup>1-2</sup> There are nearly 1.5 million children in California that have asthma, and the condition makes it difficult for this group to exercise, play, and attend school.<sup>3</sup> The causes of asthma are complex, but there are risk factors such as exposure to air pollution that are at least partially modifiable.<sup>4</sup>

There is evidence that children unable to manage their asthma tend to utilize emergency departments (ED) at increased rates.<sup>5</sup> As such, better management of this chronic disease is critical to reducing ED visits and improving the quality of life for children with asthma.<sup>6</sup>

The statewide ED visit rate for asthma was 73.0 per 10,000 children aged 0 to 17. This was similar to the rate for the Medi-Cal population of 72.6 per 10,000.<sup>7</sup> As with Californians overall,<sup>3</sup> there were strong racial/ethnic disparities among children in the Medi-Cal program. For example, African Americans were over eight times more likely than Asians/Pacific Islanders to visit the ED for asthma-related complications (see Figure below).



Figure



Source: Numerators: Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development (OSHPD) Patient Discharge Data, 2010; Denominators: Medi-Cal MIS/DSS, 2010.

Note: Members eligible for both Medicare and Medicaid were excluded.

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3. Let's Get Healthy California Task Force Final Report. <http://www.chhs.ca.gov/Documents/Let%27s%20Get%20Healthy%20California%20Task%20Force%20Final%20Report.pdf>. Published December 19, 2013. Accessed February 25, 2013.
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7. State of California, California Department of Public Health, California Breathing Program, using Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development (OSHPD) Emergency Department Data, 2010.

### Link to Data Sources and Methods