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Rudy Kills \$2.3M Asthma Fund

By FRANK LOMBARDI and JOE CALDERONE
Daily News Staff Writers

Mayor Giuliani yesterday abruptly canceled funding for a \$2.3 million asthma program that First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton had touted in a visit to the South Bronx last year as a potential national model to combat the disease.

The mayor pulled the plug after the program's president, Dr. Irwin Redlener, complained in an interview with the Daily News that the city Health Department had been dragging its feet on a contract to deliver the asthma services, even though the funds had been set aside months ago.

Giuliani yesterday said Redlener and the Children's Health Fund, which runs the program, were "unwilling to be accountable for spending."

"He has refused to live by the accountability standards that we now have in our health care contracts of all kinds," the mayor said.

"Therefore, the Department of Health, on the merits, responsibly decided not to do business with him, and they're not going to do business with him. They are going to have those services provided in other ways."

Redlener yesterday said he was willing to go along with reasonable standards but objected to reporting requirements contained in a 14-page

reporting requirements contained in a 14-page rider that was added to the standard city contract.

"They wanted to approve the purchase of every single piece of equipment in advance," he said.

The fund and the City Council last summer devised a four-year plan to expand asthma education and medical services.

"Enough is enough," said Council Speaker Peter Vallone (D-Queens). "We need to get this money away from the bureaucrats and get it delivered to the thousands of children who are suffering."

The program called for increasing staffing for asthma services at a South Bronx clinic affiliated with Montefiore Medical Center and to provide increased services in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. The fund also planned to dispatch two specially equipped vans to schools and shelters where asthma rates are high.

Outside the clinic yesterday, asthma sufferers said they were disappointed with the mayor's decision. "Doesn't the mayor realize that people are dying?" said Mavelin Morales, 37, whose 5-year-old son, Benigno, is treated at the clinic. "They keep putting smokestacks and Dumpsters in this neighborhood but not asthma clinics."

A White House official called the program's demise "unfortunate" but said the First Lady would not take sides.

Read The News' Special Series on Asthma: The Silent Epidemic

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