



Mold Remediation Part 1: Hiring the Right Team & Order of Events

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Kendra Seymour

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And if I had to distill the biggest problem with the inspection and remediation industry down to just one thing, it would be this. It's like the Wild West. It's not regulated at the federal level, nor is it in most states. In fact, only seven states require the person remediating your home to be licensed or certified. So that means in 43 states, more or less, I could go to bed tonight, and wake up tomorrow, and call myself a mold remediator.

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Thank you to our sponsor, Airmada Drying Solutions. Their generosity helps keep our resources free and available to the public. For more information on our sponsor, please head on over to our Corporate Partners page at ChangeTheAirFoundation.org. As a reminder, this mini class series is designed to provide a consumer-friendly overview of the mold remediation process. It is not a do-it-yourself series, nor does it cover every detail or scenario that needs to be considered during mold remediation. Before beginning mold remediation, be sure to work with a knowledgeable Indoor Environmental Professional and remediation company.

Hello. My name is Kendra Seymour, and welcome to part one of our free mold remediation mini class series brought to you by Change the Air Foundation. Now, the goal of this series is simple, empower you, the homeowner or renter, so you can make informed decisions before you remediate your home for mold and water damage. Unfortunately, there are a lot of practices that pass as “remediation” that are ineffective, insufficient, and even unsafe. And ultimately, this wastes your time, and your money, and puts the health of you and your loved ones at risk. So, I hope you'll join me, not just for Part One, but through the 11 Part series, because I promise, you're going to learn a lot, and you're going to save yourself time and money in the long run. We really want you to feel confident that the next time an inspector, a contractor, a landlord, your spouse, a remediator says, “Let's do this,” that you aren't overwhelmed with technical sounding language or fall victim to a sales pitch. Instead, you'll be able to advocate for yourself, to understand if what they're telling you truly is what is best for *you*, instead of what is, you know, easiest, fastest, or cheapest for them. That said, the most important part of this journey starts right here with Part One, where I talk about the order of operations and how to find the best IEP and remediator for your home. So, let's jump right in. Where do you start? Now, one of the reasons, I think, that

mold and water damage gets swept under the rug or ignored, is because it can be really hard to know where to start, right? It can be hard to know who to trust, and it can be hard to find accurate and up-to-date information. Even some of the information on our government websites is outdated, or minimal to non-existent. So, let's first talk about what you don't do if you think you have a problem with mold and water damage. And the first thing is, I don't want you to panic, and I know that's easier said than done, but when we panic, we tend to make poor choices, and that leads into, you know, the second thing I don't want you to do. I don't want you to spray or touch or otherwise disturb the mold, right? I don't care, you know, what product it is, put down the bleach, put down the vinegar, put down whatever mold killing, you know, spray or paint that you bought...because anytime you disturb mold, whether it's with, you know, soap and water or a fancy chemical...you risk aerosolizing any mold spores, and fragments, and mycotoxins into the air. You know, this is why safe and effective remediation has those engineering controls in place; is to minimize any of those byproducts from entering, you know, your living space.

Another thing I don't want you to do is to call a remediation company first. And I know you're probably thinking like, "Wait, what?" Now, I'm going to make the case through the course of this class that the first call you really want to make is probably to an Indoor Environmental Professional...or an IEP for short. And we're going to talk about why. Last, don't hire the first person you see online, or the first person who can get to your house, or necessarily someone just because they have good reviews. I want you to take the time to learn about this process and to vet carefully anyone you hire. And I promise, you'll save yourself, you know, a lot of time and headaches in the long run.

So, let's talk about what you should do. I want you to take a deep breath. I want you to research before you react. And this mini class series, our free guides, and our other interviews at ChangeTheAirFoundation.org, are a great place to get, you know, unbiased and research-based information. So, here are, you know, the order of operations. It's important to have a plan, because doing things in the wrong order at the wrong time can waste time and money, and most of us don't have endless piles of cash. So, you know the order of operations, it matters. Step One. Now, this usually involves, you know, investigating the home for signs of mold and water damage. And typically, this means hiring a *knowledgeable* IEP (and we're going to talk about how you can separate, you know, the so-so IEPs from the good ones...who are going to, you know, really get to the bottom of what might be going on in the home.)

So, Step Two, after you've had your, you know, thorough inspection, if needed, you're going to vet and hire a knowledgeable remediation company (and we're going to talk about that as well.) Step Three, you perform post-remediation verification, and we actually have Part 11 of our mini class series dedicated to that. So, we're not going to dig too deeply into that, but that's an important step that happens, you know, *before* the remediation company removes the containment and the engineering controls. You're actually going to have your IEP come back a second time, and they're going to perform that testing. And again, Part 11 is going to have a lot of additional details and information about what that process looks like.

So, after Step Three, Step Four is you may consider, you know, cleaning the home and the rest of the belongings. And you may need to address the HVAC or other heating and cooling systems...if it wasn't addressed as part of Step Two. And a good IEP can help you determine, you know, if and how those pieces need to be addressed. And then last, Step Five is, you know, reevaluate how you feel, and if needed, work with a knowledgeable healthcare practitioner if health symptoms persist. So, if you're furiously trying to write down all these steps, I don't want you to worry, because you're going to love this. We've actually put these five steps into a free download, which you can find by heading on over to our website at ChangeTheAirFoundation.org. You're going to click on our Resource tab, and then select Free Downloads. There, you'll see, actually, I think it's 12 Free Downloads, all available for you. Our resources, as always, are free and available to the public.

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Kendra Seymour

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I think too, if I kind of had to summarize this into, like, the biggest challenge we face as homeowners and renters when it comes time to hire someone is, it can be really hard to separate the good companies from the bad. And this is why, you know, the truth of the matter is, you really have to learn and you have to become your own advocate...because no one will care about your health or your home as much as you. But I don't want you to lose hope, because that's why you're here, and we've got you covered.

So, before we jump into finding that good IEP and that good remediation company, I want to point out some free resources that you're definitely going to want to take advantage of. So, you can either take a screenshot of these websites right now, or you can pause the video and go bookmark them. But, the first one is our 12 free downloads. These PDFs have been downloaded almost 15,000 times...which is amazing! And they're filled with information for you, the homeowner or renter, written in layman's terms. And they have everything on there, from detailed guides, and checklists, to tips for hiring the right IEP and remediation company. So please, check those out, download them, print them, share them, you know, upload them to your favorite Facebook groups.

Okay, the second thing I want to highlight, and I've mentioned this before, is our Start Here feature (and oh man, I am excited about this). Truly, if you do nothing else, if you don't watch the rest of the series, I really hope you check out this feature. It is one of a kind interactive feature. And it covers in detail those Five Steps I just shared and taking you, through you know, how to find that right IEP, through the remediation process, to steps for cleaning your home and belongings...and it's step-by-step support. So, you're definitely going to want to bookmark that one.

And then finally, if you want to understand safe and more, you know, effective remediation practices, please consider downloading, you know, your free copy of Mold Remediation at a Glance. Now, you get this exclusively when you sign up for our free newsletter at ChangeTheAirFoundation.org. And it's truly a fantastic companion piece to this series, and it's super handy to print off and share. It's about 20 pages, but it's filled with lots of helpful diagrams, and explanations, and tips, and it's all in user-friendly language. Now, I like to say that, you know, truth be told, this is the document that remediation companies don't want

you to have...because you're going to be like the most knowledgeable homeowner and renter on the block when you grab this. So, definitely check that out as well.

So, now that you know a little bit more about the order, let's get into how do you find the best companies for your project. And if I had to distill the biggest problem with the inspection and remediation industry down to just one thing, it would be this: It's like the Wild West. It's not regulated at the federal level, nor is it in most states. In fact, only seven states require the person remediating your home to be licensed or certified. So that means, in 43 states, more or less, I could go to bed tonight and wake up tomorrow and call myself a 'Mold Remediator.' Lots of practices, as I said before, passes remediation that are ineffective, insufficient, even unsafe. And when that happens, right, you're the one left paying the price, either with your health or with your checkbook. And if you don't believe me, call five different companies...and you're going to get five different solutions for your problem.

So, there really are three key people in your remediation project (and now, before someone crucifies me, I want to give an honorable mention here to your healthcare practitioner.) But for the purposes of this talk, we're focusing on the individual's tasks with making your home healthy. Now, you are the first person who needs to be involved. Why? Because you know more about your home than anyone else. You know the history. You know past leaks and water issues. You know, you know if water came in the door last summer, you know, during a particularly bad storm. You know that your children have overflowed the toilet a few times. You know when something doesn't look right or smell right. You know, you will notice the subtle signs of water damage before anyone else.

The second person is your Indoor Environmental Professional, and they're specifically trained to seek out, you know, mold, water damage and other, you know, indoor environmental pollutants (and that's what we're going to dig into next.) And then, of course, the third person is that mold remediation company (and we're also going to dig into that as well.) I do want to point out that we have provided in that free download section, that you can access by going to our Resource tab, a download that talks about the three key people in a little bit more detail, if you're interested in checking that out.

Now, this next point is so important, I gave it its own slide. The person doing the inspection and testing of your home should be different than the person doing the remediation. Using the same person to do both is a conflict of interest, and is not even actually legal in some states. And this is because the person inspecting your home should not, you know, have a financial incentive in the size of your project. They're there to offer, kind of, an independent assessment of what might be going on in the home. Right? When they write their report, you know, they're going to make suggestions that are based on what is best and safest for you, *not* what is easiest, and fastest, or cheapest for the remediation company. And if you use the same person, they could exaggerate the scope of the problem, because they want to charge you more. Say, "Hey, here's your problem. Don't worry. I'm going to sell you the solution." But on the flip side, they could also be downplaying it to make it easier for them. We sometimes see this one with rentals, you know, the contractor will show up and say, "Oh, you don't have to worry about that. It's just a little bit, or it's dry, or it doesn't look like

the dangerous kind of mold. I'm just going to clean this up. You know, we don't need to, actually, you know, remediate this.”

And the other point, and I've started mentioning this when I talk about finding the right people for your home. Please, please understand that a free estimate offered by a remediation company is not the same thing as a proper inspection done by an IEP...and I'm going to say that again...your free estimate from the remediation company is not the same thing as a proper inspection. And I'm going to explain the differences between those in just a moment. If you get a free estimate, you are essentially getting a sales pitch to buy their services. So, keep that in mind. You want them separate.

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Kendra Seymour

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So, let's talk about the different IEPs. Now, there are three different types of IEPs. Now, “types” is in quotations because these are not official designations folks. You know, they're just three categories that a lot of IEPs tend to fall into. And I have to give credit to Brian Karr, because he shared these categories during an interview I did with him. But type one, this is the IEP who comes into your house for maybe 45 minutes or an hour. They look around for a bit. *Most* of the time is spent, you know, setting up and taking down air testing equipment...of which, you know, maybe they picked a few random rooms, and they took some ambient air samples. They leave and they call it a day. And they say things like, “You know what? The air testing will tell us if you have a problem in your home.” No, we have a lot of information on some of the limitations of various testing options related to how tests are done and when. So, I'm not going to cover that here, but high-level air testing, in that way, tends to miss or downplay the issue. So, air testing does have a role...but in the way it's typically done, by just taking a few random samples from the center of your room, is often not going to give you a great picture.

So, IEP number two, you know, this is the person that only does like, maybe a visual assessment, or they rely *only* on tools. So, what does this look like? It would look like they walk into your home. Maybe they're looking around. Maybe they even sniff the air. I've seen IEPs do this. And they probably explain things like “Well, I don't see anything. I don't smell mold. You know, you're good.” They typically ignore the signs of water damage, because it doesn't look like mold, right? It just looks like water damage. They likely don't look in your attic or crawl space, and, you know, they probably didn't even pull out a flashlight. Or they rely maybe only on tools like moisture meters or thermal imaging.

Now, these are great tools. I own these tools, and I use them in my home, but you know, they're not the end all be all. So, for example, if someone is using maybe thermal imaging camera and they're scanning your home, and the area is not currently wet, it will not show up on the thermal imaging camera. Thermal imaging is designed to pick up on temperature differences, you know, such you know, that occur behind walls, and that could be from things like maybe missing insulation (could be from moisture), but folks, it's not some magic camera that, like, sees mold behind the wall. That would be cool, but that's, unfortunately, not how it works, right? And so, it's a tool, but like any tool or task, it has specific, you know, limitations, and it has specific purposes. And so, you never want to

make a determination about your home, and the health of your home, based on any single data point, right? It's about big picture. So, that leads us to IEP number three. This is the IEP. I call it a multi-pronged approach, and this is who you want to hire. So, we're going to jump in on the next slide with information about what that person looks like.

So, these are, kind of, my four parts...how I kind of summarize what a good investigation looks like. And you want to think of it like a puzzle, and you need all the pieces of the puzzle to complete the picture. So, what's the first thing that they would do? They're going to do a thorough investigation of the entire home. So, this includes, like top to bottom attics and crawl spaces. You know, I would advise against hiring an IEP who won't go into your attic or crawl space, all right? The IEP is gonna, they're gonna look in closets and under sinks, and they're gonna pull out your refrigerator. You know, they're also gonna look at the exterior of your home to see how conditions, you know, outside your home...grading and drainage, things like that, might be impacting the building envelope and the interior of your home, right? This is a multi-hour investigation. Even in a relatively small place. And you know, they're looking for the signs of water damage, you know, not just signs of mold growth. And we're going to show you a few pictures here in a moment. And we have a few free resources that you can grab from a free download section. One called, "Five Signs of Water Damage." We do have a free "Testing Guide" and then "Questions to Ask When Hiring an IEP" (and we'll get into a little bit more about what those look like as well.)

But, you know, I think one of the things that people don't always understand and you know, one of the secrets to looking for mold, is actually to look for the signs of water damage. And sometimes I think people think...because they don't see mold, or they don't smell mold...that they don't have a problem. And unfortunately, it's just not that simple. So, I've included, you know, a few real-life examples from homes that maybe don't look like they're that big of a deal, but a surface sample was taken, and, you know, it can tell a different story. So, here's just some, you know, water staining on a wall. It doesn't look particularly bad, but you can see from the testing that there's a little bit more going on than maybe what meets the eye. And we know from, you know, one of our series later, you'll learn from Michael Pinto, he talks about situations like this...if the moisture source is on the hidden side of the wall, right, and all you see is the stain...we can expect to find five to 10 times more mold growth on the backside of that drywall. So, you don't want to be dismissing signs of water damage, or something just that doesn't look like a little bit, because often what we see is just the tip of the iceberg. Here's another example of a door frame. Doors and windows, and really any penetration into your building envelope can be an entryway for bugs and moisture, if it's not built properly...if it's not maintained. This one had a lot of *Stachybotrys* that was going on there and behind that wall. So again, it's not the giant haunted house that many of us, you know, picture in the movies when we think about mold.

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Kendra Seymour

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Here's an example from a mini split. If you think about this, you know, someone might say, "Oh, it's just dirty. It needs to be cleaned." But your air is blowing out, and along with it, looks like a great deal of, you know, *Cladosporium*. So, you want to be mindful of, you know, not just dismissing something simply because maybe it's, you know, you think it might be

dirt. Here's an example of, you know, an HVAC and water heater platform. This just looks really dirty, but it has a lot of *Stachybotrys*, and *Chaetomium*, and *Aspergillus* and *Penicillium*-like spores. You know, these are toxin producing molds, and not something you want, you know, in your indoor environment. And of course, attics, you know, we don't want to dismiss the impacts that attics can have on our home. It is possible for the air in your attic to make its way down into your living space. And so, just because you're not living in the attic or living in the crawl space, doesn't mean the air in those spaces can impact your health (and we'll talk about that a little bit more in Parts 4 through 7).

Now, Part Two is, you know, it's strategic and targeted testing, right? So, they should use, you know, the information they gain from the thorough investigation to decide when, and how, and what kinds of tests that they're going to take, right? This means they aren't just taking random samples or just taking an air sample...to take a sample, right? And this is true whether it's air testing, or PCR, ERMI, or a dust testing, and tape samples, right? Doing the wrong test, in the wrong way, at the wrong time, can lead to incomplete and inaccurate results. You know. You know, if they're just taking that air sample from the center of a room, far from walls and floors, you know, where moisture and mold lurk, you know, it's probably not going to give you the best representation of what's going on. You know, we don't get into testing further in this series, we do have a free guide that you can download that talks about the pros and cons of different testing. So, I encourage you to check that out if you want to learn a little bit more.

So the detailed history of the home. And it does blow my mind how often this piece gets overlooked. The history of the home matters. Now you don't always know what the history of the home is. But the history of the home while you're living there, at a minimum, offers some important clues. So, you know, if there have been those previous issues, even small events, you know, overflowed dishwashers and leaks or a sump pump failure, or whatever. History matters, right? If you're noticing, like, odd or intermittent odors, you know, or staining, those are all clues. You know, even if you've had a previous mold remediation, you want to mention that to your IEP, right? If you've had a remodel, you know, maybe a bathroom or a kitchen, mention that. You know, I lived in a house once where an addition was put on to the home, and we had only been living in the home three days the first time it rained. And water started coming in where the addition met the original part of the house, and so we ended up having to remediate that, open it up and fix splashing and roofing issues. So those, those kinds of things certainly play a role in your inspection, or they should.

So, number four is the survey of occupant health, and you know, if you're having symptoms every time you walk into your office, right? And maybe something's going on in that room and your body's trying to tell you something, you know, or maybe just overall, you're, you know, you're having things like reoccurring sinus infections or, you know, unexplained health issues that aren't getting better. You know, autoimmune condition, you know, chronic fatigue, all of these things...if, even if you think they might not be related, you know, it's worth mentioning to your IEP when they're there to do the investigation.

Kendra Seymour

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So this kind of sums it up. You know, what does a good, or I'd like to say, a knowledgeable IEP look like, because not all IEPs are created the same. Their skill sets, their certifications, their trainings vary. And I do want to mention that, you know, IEPs kind of...it's a general term. It is not a certification in and of itself. We're going to talk about certifications as starting points on the next slide, so we'll get there. But, you know, you want that IEP to offer that independent assessment of your home, right? They are specifically trained to seek out sources of water, intrusion, and mold. This is a skill set. It is something that, you know, they're gonna have to invest in learning, and training, and time, right?

They're gonna investigate that entire home, not just the one area that maybe you call them about that, right? So, if you have a problem in the bathroom, you actually want them looking at the whole house, right? They're going to understand that mold is often hidden behind walls, and underneath floors, and in those hard to reach places. And really, they're there to ensure that any remediation that's done, the practices that are recommended, the scope of work is based on what's best for you, right? And then ultimately, they're going to be the ones to write that remediation plan that they're going to give to the remediation company to follow, and you know, they are the go between you and the remediation company...because even the best laid plans have hiccups and things arise. And it's great that you can have that independent person to call when that happens. And then ultimately, at the end after remediation, but before, you know, the containment comes down, your IEP is going to come back a second time, and they're going to perform that post-remediation verification we talked about.

So now, the million-dollar question is, how do you find a good IEP? And there are two things that you need to know. One, not all certifications are created equal. Two, certifications are kind of the minimum, the bare minimum, the starting point. So, you can take a screenshot of this, or better yet, if you go over to ChangeTheAirFoundation.org, and you go to our Resource tab, you're going to see a section called, "Start Here", and that's our new feature. And you can click on Step One, and you're going to see lots of helpful information about how to find an IEP. And you're going to see this yellow box, and we recommend some starting certifications. Again, not all certifications and licensing programs are created equal, and as someone who has taken many of these trainings, believe me, I can tell you that's true.

In fact, I was speaking with a mom in Massachusetts, and after a series of botched remediations, her and her 17-year-old son decided to take a training course (a certification course) on how to become mold remediators in their state. Basically, they now have this paper declaring that they can remediate homes. And what they did was spend eight hours in a classroom. They never built containment or set up engineering controls. There was nothing hands on. In fact, the mom had to explain to the teacher and the rest of the class about mycotoxins and cross-contamination. So, if someone says, "Hey, don't worry, I'm certified." That's a perfect opportunity to ask more questions. Don't just assume that they have the knowledge and expertise that you're looking for.

So, all that said, we provided the ACAC link, and you can look for a CMI, a CIE or CIEC certifications. Those are great places to start. You can also look at the NORMI website for someone with a CMA certification. And again, this is all hyperlinked on our website, under our Start Here tab—Step One. And because, as I said, those certifications (even these), are just kind of a bare minimum and a starting point. When you're at our website, you can grab a free copy of “Questions to Ask when Hiring an IEP.” And not only do I give you the questions to ask, I give you the answers to listen for. So, between these two resources, the starting certifications and the questions to ask, you're going to be in a really good position to find an IEP...who's going to really understand how to do a really proper investigation of your home. So, check those out.

So, there are some red flags when hiring an IEP. These are on our website under that Start Here feature I told you about. So, I'm not going to get into them all, but I do want to touch on a few that that we haven't talked about. And again, you know, if the IEP is not going to go into your attic or crawl space, you may want to consider someone else. But there is another red flag that I haven't brought up at all. If the IEP wants to charge a percentage of the overall job, you may want to move on, and this is because they should have no financial interest in the size of your project. Now, I once spoke with an IEP who said he would just take a percentage of the overall cost of the remediation project. No. No. No, right? That means he could, you know, exaggerate the scope of work, because the bigger your remediation bill, the bigger his payday is going to be. So, they should have no financial interest in the size of your project.

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Kendra Seymour

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And if the IEP doesn't believe that mold and water damage in your attic or in your crawl space or behind walls, or you know, floors is a problem, you may want to move on to someone else, right? This is because, you know, our ceilings and our floors, they're not hermetically sealed...meaning there are gaps and there are cracks present. And these openings can be from light fixtures, and electrical, you know, switches, and recessed lights, and other penetrations. And even, you know, the gap where your drywall meets the floor can allow for movement of these particles, especially when the pressure differentials in your home changes...and that happens throughout the day. And while these openings may seem small to us, they're big enough to allow these particles like spores, and fragments, even mycotoxins out into your living space. Now further, there is a phenomenon known as stack effect (and I won't get into that now), but basically it talks about how, you know, air in the lower levels of your home can move upward, and the reverse is also true, where air in your attic can move down into your living spaces. So again, you know, use the questions that we provided to ask when hiring an IEP, and you're going to be well on your way.

So let's switch gears now, and let's talk about remediation. So, there are different “types” of remediators out there, and just like there were different “types” of IEPs. I put “types” and “remediation” in quotes, because, again, these are not official categories. These are my categories based on what I see happening every day in the industry. Now, if I had to sum up how most remediation is handled, it would be this. We treat remediation as if it's merely a

cosmetic issue, not a health issue. And so, that's why you're going to see things like, "We're just going to tear it out and we're going to take zero precautions." David Myrick, in episodes, you know, 4 through 7, really talks about how and why that is not a good idea. Every time you disturb mold, and you're ripping it out, you are sending those particles, those spores, and fragments, into the air. And that, you know, oftentimes bad remediation can be worse than no remediation at all.

My other group is the spray-and-pray group, and this can include fogging. And this looks like, you know, companies who come in and they're going to put this special mold-killing paint, or spray, or chemical on it, and that's going to kill the mold. And there are a couple issues there that we address in parts 4 through 7, in a little bit more detail. But high-level chemical shortcuts alone, there's a lot of research that shows even with some of your favorite products, you know, don't go far enough to address and remove the issue. A lot of times, it just simply bleaches the color from the colony. It doesn't penetrate to address the mold, you know, hyphae or roots. And you can have a problem later. Unfortunately, you know, companies who do that stop short (and we have a lot in this series that speak to that in a little bit more detail.)

Now, the next group, I call this the halfhearted attempt, and that icon is actually supposed to be an air scrubber. And this is where it gets a little bit trickier, right? They look like maybe they have some of the things in place. Maybe they're building some sort of containment, or they bring in an air scrubber, and they got some sort of PPE. And...but unfortunately, we're talking about microscopic particles that you can't see, and so this is a little trickier for the homeowner—which is why this series exists...because it can be hard to separate this halfhearted attempt from effective and safe remediation. And that's what this series is about. Parts 4 through 7 with David Myrick talk about this.

So, let's get into what safe and effective remediation looks like. How you're going to find the company to do that. Now, I think what is hard is people really seem to have a hard time wrapping their head around just how crazy it is out there in the remediation industry. When you talk about remediation, and I talk about remediation, and the contractor talks about remediation, chances are we are talking about different things. We assume that when someone says "remediation", that we're all talking about the same procedures—the same process. And that couldn't be further from the truth. And it took me a long time to kind of come up with a way to really, like, illustrate this point for people.

So, I came up with an analogy. And it goes like this... Remediation is not like buying a burger. And I want you to think about your favorite chain restaurant. If you went to that chain restaurant in Florida and then in Alaska, and you ordered a hamburger, you know, chances are you're pretty much going to get the same thing right? The same bun, the same amount of meat, the same special sauce, lettuce, tomato, onion, no onion, whatever it is, right? Well it will be in the same in Florida as it is in Alaska. But remediation is not like buying a burger. It would be like if I went to that same chain restaurant in Florida, but instead of a burger, I got a taco...and then I went to that same chain restaurant in Alaska, and I ordered a burger, but I got, you know, chicken nuggets. I mean, yes, both times you got food, but you didn't

get a burger. And remediation is the same way. Because, if I hire a company in Florida to remediate my home that could look wildly different than the company in Alaska.

And you really don't even need to go across the country to illustrate this, right? You know, in your home state, call five, you know, different remediation companies, and you're going to get five different solutions, you know, for your problem. You know, one company might tell you, you know, "We can just fog it. We don't need to open up the walls and remove anything." One company might say, you know, "We're just going to tear it out. We're going to paint this stuff over it, and it's going to seal in the mold, and you're going to be fine." You know. And one company might do full engineering controls, and containment, proper PPE,. You know, it's just, it's not really regulated out there, you know. You wouldn't tolerate that inconsistency from a fast food restaurant. You would just stop going, you know. So, when people say remediation, I always want you to think of it as "remediation" in quotes, and use that opportunity to ask what they mean. You know, because what it means to you can be, you know, different than what it means to them. And that's why we're doing this series, because Parts 4 through 7, and then some of the additional episodes talk to you about what safe and effective remediation should look like.

Now I did just want to throw this slide in here quickly. You can maybe take a screenshot if you want. You know, mold remediation is about safe and effective removal, and those words that I put there, *safe* and *effective* are important. Anyone can remediate, but can they do so *safely* and can they do so *effectively*? That's the key. And David gets into the details of this in Episode 4 through 7. But again, I wanted to pull out a few quotes from the IICRC S520 standards for mold remediation, because I think it really kind of hammers home some of the important points about what that looks like. So, you know, the first one is, it says "Physically removing mold contamination is the primary means of remediation. Mold contamination should be physically removed from the structure and system and contents, because attempts to kill, encapsulate, or inhibit mold instead of proper source removal are generally not accurate." You know, later on, it talks about source removal should always be the primary means of remediation, right? These indiscriminate uses of coatings, and chemicals, and stuff, you know, are going to fall short, you know. And some of my renters love this next one, "Porous building materials (so, drywall, insulation, ceiling tiles), with mold growth, they should be removed and discarded." Right? Remediators, you know, for those wood framing and structural components, will remove the mold growth from the surfaces....and we get into that in Part 5 (so I won't talk about that now.) But HEPA vacuuming, followed by damp wiping, and wire-brushing, and sanding and other abrasive measures, right? So, we're not going to try to salvage moldy drywall.

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Kendra Seymour

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And again, another, you know, reiteration that mold remediation is about removal, right? Using all of these fancy solutions and stuff as a substitute for proper source removal is strongly discouraged. So, just wanted to point you towards some of the mold remediation standards that are out there.

So, what does the mold remediation company do? Well, ideally, again, this is kind of a summary. They're going to implement the recommendations from your IEP. And we recommend that your remediator follow *at a minimum* the standards laid out by the IICRC S520, and can perform them accordingly. So, it's not enough just to...did they take the training and read the standards? Do they actually put those into practice in their work? And remember, largely, you know, this...these are optional standards for people to follow. Now in some cases, if you're the mold-sensitized client or you have other health issues, you may need to go above and beyond the standards. And Part 3 and part 10 talk about what that might look like, right?

Again, remediation focuses on removal and not killing. And, you know, I think another point that I want to reiterate that (we haven't talked about yet), is that, in their contract, your mold remediator will say that if they fail post-remediation verification by your IEP or third party, they will come back and either, you know, re-clean or re-remediate the area at no additional cost to you. And again, I believe it's Part 11 with Michael Pinto, we talk about post-remediation verification. Why that is so critical...and you don't want to skip that step...but he goes into detail about what that will look like. So, I'm not going to cover that here. I do want to say, though, I'm going to give one more shout out for this. If you want kind of your, you know, remediation playbook, I want you to head on over to our website, ChangeTheAirFoundation.org, sign up for our free newsletter, because you get a free copy, exclusively for those on our newsletter of "Mold Remediation at a Glance". Which is a consumer-friendly guide to the mold remediation process. And again, it's a nice companion piece to this series, so you can print it out. You can read through it. You can take notes as you watch the series. You're going to find that incredibly helpful. So, check that out.

So then this leads me to you know, how do you find a knowledgeable remediation company? So again, two things are true. One, not all certifications are created equal, and two certifications are a bare minimum. So just like our IEP slide, you can take a screenshot here, or you can head on over to our start here feature right, which you can find under our resource tab, and you'll see this yellow box part way down. And we recommend starting with a company who follows at a minimum, you know, the IICRC S520 Standards. And we provided that link, and you can use their locator feature to find someone who is AMRT certified. And again, because certifications are just those, you know, minimal requirements, we've provided a list of questions and a free download called "Questions to Ask When Hiring a Mold Remediation Company", and we give you the questions to ask and, of course, the answers to listen for. There are lots of details in there that, you know, we just don't have time to cover during the course of this training, so definitely download that, print it out, and check it out. You don't even need to sign up for our email to get that.

Now, I'm loosely paraphrasing a mentor of mine here, and when he says that, "Sometimes the only thing worse than no remediation is bad remediation." And sometimes I see really well-intentioned individuals and companies who accidentally make the situation worse, because either they didn't know what they were doing, or they thought they were doing things correctly. So that's why, you know, one of the things I told you in the beginning was to research before you react, before you hire that company, take a moment and get your bearings and make the best choice, you know, with who you hire. And I know that's hard to

hear, because you typically want the problem, you know, the mold and water damage, out of your house ASAP. And I and I understand that, but take the time to find the right people to remove that safely, so you don't accidentally make the home worse.

So, I'm going to just take a moment here. There is a special note on remediation contracts, and that's because I really want to remind you to get everything in writing. Do not rely on verbal, or email, or text agreements. I would think it would be obvious that you should read the remediation contract, but so often people don't...and if it's not in the contract, they're not obligated to do it. And I can't tell you how many people I've talked to that will maybe get a verbal agreement. Maybe were not on the phone, "Oh, they said they follow the S520." Or maybe something in a text, and they don't bother to see if that is actually in the contract. And then what happens the day of remediation, or maybe even after, they found out that something wasn't done, you know, according to what they thought, you know, they agreed to. And then obviously they get upset, understandably. But the thing is, it wasn't in the contract.

So, you want to see things like in your contract, a diagram with specific instructions on, you know...Where will the containment will go?...Where it will be vented? You know, how are those materials going to be removed? How are workers moving, you know, in and outside of containment, and protecting the rest of the home from cross-contamination? Right? And something that you need to think about...What happens if the mold goes beyond what was in the original scope of the work? So, maybe you're remediating a bathroom, and they don't realize until they get in there. Maybe there's mold on the backside of, you know, one of the walls that backs into a bedroom, and now they need to remediate that section of wall in the bedroom. So, what happens? Do they stop the work? You know, do they set up another containment on the, you know, other room? And so, you want to have an understanding of what happens in the event that that occurs.

You also want it clearly written in the contract, what's the criteria for post-remediation, verification? You know, what's the time frame in which it has to be done? Because it should clearly state, you know, if...what a pass and what a fail is. So that everyone is in agreement *before* the work begins. And again, I'm going to send you to Part 11 of the series to get more information on that. Tips on insurance. You would be surprised how many companies aren't properly insured. So, we talk about that in there. Again, free resource on our Free Downloads page, so definitely check that out.

So red flags when hiring a remediation, company. I'm not going to read all of them. They're on our website, and you can see them here. But one of the things, I've actually seen this from a remediator in my area, they only guarantee that that post-remediation verification will pass visually. So, what does that mean? They're saying the area will just look clean. No, these are microscopic particles. You want to make sure that they're actually gone. This is why you're bringing in that third party that IEP, right? I've had this happen before. You ask a question, right? About their process, and instead of answering the question, they just tell you how many years they've been in the profession, "Oh, I've been doing this for 30 years. Oh, I, you know, da da da da da." Yeah, no, they need to be able to answer your questions. You know. Another red flag is they're going to rely on those harsh chemicals or those

shortcuts. They say things like, “Oh, the removal, the abrasive measure, that's the old school way.” No. No. Right? You know. They say things like, “Oh, it's just a little bit of mold. It can't hurt you, or, you know, it's not black, so don't worry, it's dead. It can't hurt you. It's trapped behind the wall...” Like, all of these little myths, you know, are red flags, right? So be mindful of that. And again, you can learn more on our website and our Start Here feature (remediation is covered in Step Two on that feature.)

So, I do want to take a moment to honor this that sometimes remediation doesn't make sense, or it's out of your control. You know, this is especially true if you're a renter, you don't always have control over if the area gets addressed, how the area gets addressed...and that's hard. And sometimes people find that they either need to, you know, move or switch to a different unit if one's available. And if you find yourself in that situation as a renter, I really want to encourage you to listen. We have a great episode with Corey Levy called the “Renter's Survivor Guide to Mold.” And there's a lot of great information in there that I think you'll find helpful. And even if you're a homeowner, sometimes, once you, you know, get a sense of the scope of the work, maybe financially...it's just not in your wheelhouse. Maybe you just, you don't have the emotional, or physical, or mental, you know, desire to even remediate, and you may...maybe you ultimately decide to disclose and sell. And these aren't easy decisions, and that's why a good IEP can help you really think through unique situation and possible next steps.

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Kendra Seymour

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So, there are some common mistakes, you know, and we've touched on a few already, and I want to highlight a couple that we haven't talked about. You know, please don't skip that post testing at the end. I know that it's an additional fee. You've already spent a lot of money, but that's precisely why I want you to do it. I want you to protect your investment, and protect your health, because the truth of the matter is, even good remediation companies fail post testing sometimes. These are microscopic particles, right? Another mistake I see people making is they think renovation is the same as remediation. So maybe like, “Well, let's just gut the whole bathroom I wanted to remodel anyways. We don't need to bring in a remediation company first.” And if you watch some of these other episodes, you're going to see why that's a mistake. You can't just be tearing this stuff out without proper containment. You're going to spread it throughout your home, and on your belongings, and that can make you sick or contribute to health problems.

I don't want you to think about the home inspector as the same as an IEP. So, my friends who are house hunting, you know, your home inspector has one skill set. You know, when it comes to mold and water damage, they maybe took, you know, a couple hours worth of training. You want somebody who, you know, this is their skill set. This is what they do day in and day out. So, I would encourage you to think about hiring an IEP in addition to your home inspector, if you're trying to understand, you know, what might be going on in a home you're looking to purchase when it comes to mold and water damage. And the last one, this happened to me, I want you to verify with the crew the day of the project. So not the person who you talk to on the phone, the owner of the company, or the person who came out to give you, you know, the estimate on the scope of work. The person who's

actually going to be doing the work, because I have a small area that needed to be remediated. And so, when they got here, I was going over with the head guy for the crew about where containment would go and I said, "Okay, well, where's the, you know, the Decon chamber going to go?" (that's the second chamber that's built off the first), and he said, "Well, I wasn't going to build it. I didn't bring enough material." And I said, "Well, that's not what was in the scope of work. That's not what we agreed upon." ...and he said, "Well, I'd have to go back to the office and get more material." and I said, "Well, I guess you're going to have to go back to the office and get more material." So, it's just a good idea with the people who actually show up to do the work that you are all on the same page. Have they read the scope of work? Do they know what's in the contract? So, take a moment with them that morning before things start, and set yourself up for success.

So, my final thoughts, and please know that I have been where you have been. I have made every mistake in the book, and I'm still here. My goal with this series, my goal with everything at Change the Air Foundation, is to help you make fewer mistakes than I did...than what I see so many making. So that you can protect your health, and your family, and your finances, and your home. Okay, so here are some...these are some of my truths, right? You're going to make mistakes. We all do. Give yourself some grace and move on. Right? This journey is about progress over perfection. And you know, ultimately, at the end of the day, no one's going to care about your health or your home as much as you. Which is why it's so important to me that you learn to become your own advocate. And our resources are available to you for free, so you can do just that.

So again, you can grab, if you didn't the first time. Here's a screenshot of those resources I recommend. We have those 12 free downloads. We have our Start Here interactive feature, and we have our Mold Remediation at a Glance Guide that you can grab for free when you sign up for our newsletter. And if you found this information helpful. I hope you'll join us for the rest of this series, because we're going to bring back Michael Pinto, David Myrick, Jessica McQuade and more. And we're going to cover everything from proper PPE, to engineering controls, HVAC systems, and cleaning the rest of your home and belongings. And if you want to make sure you don't miss another episode as it drops, head on over to ChangeTheAirFoundation.org, and sign up for our newsletter, because it really is the best way to get great information like this, directly to your inbox. Thanks so much. We'll see you next time.