

Safe Home Illinois

A Newsletter On Childhood Lead Poisoning and Prevention

Spring 2003

A quarterly publication of the Illinois Lead Safe Housing Task Force and Loyola University ChildLaw Center

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In the News

Illinois Lead Bills Passed – Awaiting Governor's Signature

The Illinois legislature passed three bills amending the Lead Poisoning Prevention Act. The bills are awaiting the Governor's signature.

HB 3229: Introduced by State Representative Harry Osterman, the bill establishes a Lead-Safe Housing Advisory Council charged with developing and making recommendations on a variety of steps which might be taken to eliminate childhood lead paint poisoning in Illinois. Issues for consideration by the Advisory Council will include:

- development of a primary prevention program
- adoption of lead-safe work practices for paint repair, remodeling, weatherization
- exploration of innovative funding mechanisms to help homeowners and landlords afford the cost of making housing lead safe
- legislation or rule making necessary to improve the effectiveness of state and local programs in lead abatement and other prevention and control activities. The Advisory Council will be co-chaired by IDPH and the Illinois Lead Safe Housing Task Force.

Senator Carol Ronen was the chief sponsor in the Senate. Co-sponsors included: State Representatives Julie Hamos, David E. Miller, William Delgado and Elizabeth Coulson, and State Senators Jacqueline Y. Collins, Don Harmon, and Donne E. Trotter.

HB 0207: Sponsored by State Representative Monique Davis, HB 0207 requires doctors and health care providers to screen for lead poisoning in conjunction with school health care exams when, in the doctor's judgment, the child is potentially at high risk for lead poisoning.

Senator Donne Trotter sponsored the bill in the Senate.

HB 0197: State Representative Monique Davis also sponsored HB 197 which provides for a program to screen for lead poisoning in women who live in high risk areas, are 13 or older and pregnant or lactating. Establishment of the program is subject to available funding. Rickey Hendon was the chief sponsor in the Senate.

The full text of these bills may be found at www.legis.state.il.us (at this site type in the bill number, click Search, then click Full Text).

Paint Companies Agree to Lead Warnings

On May 12, 2003, Illinois joined 48 other attorneys general in an agreement with paint manufacturers to put warning labels on paint products alerting consumers to the danger of lead exposure during home renovations. The agreement includes a 19-month interim product sticker program, to begin September 30, 2003. In addition to new labels on paint cans, paint manufacturers agreed to sponsor training sessions for, among others, non profit housing providers, community and social service organizations, homeowners and landlords. They also agreed to provide brochures to consumers through paint retailers and contractors. States that signed the agreement did not waive any right to sue paint manufacturers in the future, and the settlement does not affect existing litigation.

Chicago's Citywide Summit to End Childhood Lead Poisoning: Drafting a Strategic Plan to End Lead Poisoning in Chicago

On March 28, 2003, the Chicago Department of Public Health, with the Loyola University Chicago ChildLaw Center, convened "Lead Safe Chicago: A Citywide Summit to End Childhood Lead Poisoning." This day long summit was convened in partnership with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. More than 150 individuals participated, representing local, State and Federal government agencies, realtors and property owners, public health experts, advocates, and community organizations. Renowned researcher, Dr. Bruce Lanphear, gave the keynote address, titled "The Legacy of Lead: Childhood Lead Poisoning in the 21st Century."

The Summit is the first step towards developing a work plan for ending lead poisoning in Chicago. The facilitated afternoon breakout sessions tackled policy and program issues in four areas: Leveraging Dollars for Making Housing Lead-Safe; Fostering Compliance with Lead-Safe Housing Practices; Increasing Identification of Children with Elevated Blood Lead Levels; and Putting Childhood Lead Poisoning on Decisionmakers' Radar Screen.

Next steps include distributing preliminary ideas generated during the breakout sessions and convening follow up meetings of participants to flesh out the work plan which will be finalized fall 2003. Support for the summit came from the U.S. EPA, Chicago Community Trust, Chicago Dept. of Public Health and Loyola University Chicago.

For more information about the summit, see www.luc.edu/schools/law/centers/childlaw/special.html.

Rhode Island Strategic Plan

The Alliance to End Childhood Lead Poisoning reported in its newsletter that the RI Housing Resources Committee (HRC) is developing a four-year comprehensive strategic plan to end childhood lead poisoning. The implementation plan focuses in six areas: lead education, lead programs, financing of lead mitigation and abatement, enforcement, coordination of efforts, and assessing the availability of lead liability insurance.

To assist in plan development, HRC contracted with the National Center for Healthy Housing. Over the past two months, the Center has worked closely with HRC to interview stakeholders and develop a draft plan. On March 18, various stakeholders provided feedback on the draft plan at a day-long workshop in Providence. The Center and HRC's Strategic Plan Committee are working on the final plan, which will be completed by early June. This plan may provide a helpful template for other states that are developing strategic plans.

Sen. Schumer Urges CDC to Expand Definition of Lead Poisoning

During a news conference on April 22, 2003, U.S. Senator Charles E. Schumer strongly urged the CDC to expand its current definition of lead poisoning so that more children can be accurately diagnosed and treated. Responding to the study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* (see discussion below under "Research Updates"), Schumer said, "We need to lower the acceptable level of lead in children's blood to reflect reality, which is that it requires much less lead to affect our kids than we previously thought." Schumer urged the CDC to adjust

its definition of lead poisoning to incorporate the new findings which would allow more at-risk children to be diagnosed and treated. Furthermore, Schumer proposed to extend the CDC Advisory Panel on Lead Poisoning to include more lead-hazard experts. The current panel consists of a large number of individuals associated with the paint industry. Schumer said placing scientific experts on the panel would ensure that its decisions affecting the health of children are made on the basis of sound current science

CDC Announces New Chief of Lead Prevention Branch

CDC announced that Mary Jean Brown will become the chief of its Lead Poisoning Prevention Branch in June 2003. Currently, Brown is Assistant Professor at Harvard University School of Public Health, Department of Maternal and Child Health. She also serves on the Massachusetts Governor's Committee for Childhood Lead Poisoning. Brown is a nationally renowned expert in childhood lead poisoning and prevention.

Chicago Sues Lead Paint Companies

The City of Chicago filed a lawsuit on September 5, 2002 against major manufacturers of lead-based paint, alleging that taxpayers should no longer bear sole responsibility for treating children suffering from lead poisoning. More than 12,000 children tested positive for lead poisoning in Chicago last year, and the City spends millions annually on treatment, services, and abatement. Defendant paint manufacturers filed a motion to dismiss and the judge is due to set a date for oral argument at a status hearing on June 2nd.

Rhode Island Attorney General Seeks New Trial

Last fall, the state of Rhode Island brought an action against the nation's paint companies alleging the companies created a public nuisance by making paints that have poisoned thousands of children. That case

ended in a mistrial. However, RI Attorney General Patrick C. Lynch said that he plans to pursue another trial as soon as possible. Lynch said that his staff has been preparing to retry the case since he took office in early January 2003, and he's ready to go to trial as soon as possible. Lynch announced that Asst. Atty. Gen. Neil Kelly, who helped in the trial last fall, has been appointed to be the lead attorney. In addition, he said he will continue to have two private law firms, Decof & Decof and Ness Motley, help present the case. Lynch did not say whether he will change any of the state's legal strategies.

The state has shown that more than 35,000 Rhode Island children have been poisoned in the last 10 years by ingesting microscopic amounts of lead left behind by paints used years ago. The companies insist they didn't know lead paints were harmful when they made them, and they took them off the market when the dangers became known.

The defendants in this case are Lead Industries Association, American Cyanamid Co., Atlantic Richfield Co., E.I. Dupont De Nemours and Co., the O'Brien Corp., Cytec Industries, NL Industries Inc., Millennium Inorganic Chemicals and Sherwin-Williams Co.

To read the superior court's ruling on the defendants' motion to dismiss, click on the following link:

<http://www.courts.state.ri.us/superior/pdf/99-5226.PDF>

HMO Settles a Lawsuit Alleging it Failed to Test For Lead Poisoning

Missouri Attorney General Jay Nixon announced a \$1.1 million settlement with HealthCare USA of Missouri, settling a lawsuit that alleged the HMO had failed to test

thousands of St. Louis children for lead poisoning. Federal rules and HealthCare USA's contract with the state required the company to test St. Louis children enrolled in Medicaid for lead poisoning at ages 1 and 2 (about 19,000 children) and provide treatment for those who tested positive. The state's 1999 lawsuit alleged that HealthCare USA failed to test 71 percent of 1-year-olds and 83 percent of 2-year-olds. In the St. Louis area, an average of nine children a day are diagnosed with lead poisoning, according to Judy Riehl, executive director of the St. Louis Lead Prevention Council.

The settlement announced Thursday also calls for HealthCare USA to donate \$10,000 to the Missouri Lead Coalition Task Force.

Missouri filed another suit in 1999 against Prudential Health Care Plan Inc. That lawsuit is still pending.

To learn more about the settlement, the article, "HMO settles suit over testing children for lead," can be found in the Dec. 20, 2002 edition of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

New Materials Available

Illinois Lead Surveillance Report

National figures on childhood lead poisoning are on the decline. But in 2001 more than 7% of Illinois children tested had lead levels that were considered elevated. Illinois has one of the highest rates of childhood lead poisoning in the country.

A new IDPH Lead Surveillance Report will be available soon at www.idph.state.il.us. For more information, contact Cheryl Wycoff at (217) 785-5378 or cwycoff@idph.state.il.us.

CDC's Second National Report on Human Exposure to Environmental Chemicals

The National Report on Human Exposure to Environmental Chemicals is an ongoing assessment of the exposure of the U.S. population to environmental chemicals using biomonitoring. The second national report was released in January 2003. This report presents blood levels of 116 environmental chemicals, including lead, from a sample of people that represent the non-institutionalized civilian U.S. population during 1999-2000.

To download the report, go to www.cdc.gov/exposurereport/chemicallist.htm

EPA Releases Second Report on Trends in Children's Health

In February 2003, The EPA published "America's Children and the Environment: Measures of Contaminants, Body Burdens, and Illnesses," the Agency's second report on trends in environmental factors related to the health and well-being of children in the United States. Drawing on information from various sources, the report shows trends in environmental contaminant levels in air, water, food, and soil; concentrations of contaminants measured in the bodies of children and women; and childhood illnesses which may be influenced by exposure to environmental contaminants.

Regarding lead, the report showed a continued reduction in children's level as identified by CDC's Second National Report. Notably, concentrations of lead in

children's blood differed by race/ethnicity and family income.

The full report can be found at the following link: http://www.epa.gov/envirohealth/children/ace_2003.pdf

CEHRC Provides New Information in Spanish

The Community Environmental Health Resource Center has new Spanish-language materials available throughout its site, including resident fact sheets, sampling instructions, checklists, and reports for lead, cockroaches, radon, visual survey and the sampling results report.

To access the CEHRC website, go to: <http://www.cehrc.org/>

New Environmental Newsletter

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) recently began publishing a new newsletter entitled "Public Health and the Environment." Their first issue focuses on children's environmental health. You can view the newsletter at: www.atsdr.cdc.gov/HEC/HSPH/hsphhome.html

High Intensity Targeted Lead Screening In Chicago

The Chicago High Intensity Targeted Screening Program (HITS) is a collaboration between the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) and several federal, state and local agencies to implement the national strategy to eliminate childhood lead poisoning by 2010. HITS is a door-to-door blood lead testing project that offers families testing services in their own homes. This July, HITS' effort will target Austin. The first HITS were done in the fall of 2001 in Austin and North Lawndale. CDPH provides follow-up services to participating families, including confirmatory testing,

environmental inspections and information about HUD abatement funds. Door-to-door work proves to be one of the most effective ways of getting young children tested as it identifies very young children who are not found through routine screening efforts.

Chicago was chosen by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for the first HITS because the city has one of the nation's highest lead poisoning rates. Of the approximate 100,000 children that the city tested in 2001, 7% had elevated levels. Chicago's rates are so high in part because of its housing stock is so old. Chicago's housing stock is 3 times older than the national average.

Research Updates

Study Finds Even "Safe" Lead Levels Can Lower IQ in Children

Research now shows that low lead levels, once believed to be safe in children, can severely impact children's intellectual development. The study, recently published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, tracked 172 children born in Rochester, NY between July 1994 and January 1995. The children were followed for six years. Researchers found that blood levels of lead below current federal guidelines (10 mcg/dL) produce a surprisingly large drop in IQ of up to 7.4 points. Researchers estimate that one in every 50 U.S. children has lead levels above that guideline and that one in every 10 has levels of 5 micrograms/deciliter or above - well within the dangerous range.

In a news release issued by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, one of the researchers, Bruce Lanphear, stated "Our study suggests that there is no discernable threshold for the adverse effects of lead exposure and that many more children than previously estimated are affected by this toxin...Despite a dramatic decline over the last two decades in the prevalence of children who have blood lead concentrations above 10 mcg/dL, these data underscore the increasing importance of prevention."

The full research study can be found at 348 NEJM. April 17, 2003, 1517-1526.

Low Lead Levels May Cause Delay in Puberty in Girls

Also published in the April NEJM, researchers from the Environmental Protection Agency found that low levels of lead delay puberty for several months in young girls, especially African Americans and Latinas. Although delaying puberty is not necessarily harmful, the findings suggest that lead is interfering with critical hormonal processes during development. "That fits in with the increased interest in general with the idea that environmental chemicals can be endocrine disruptors," said Dr. David Bellinger of Harvard Medical School. "Lead has not been considered as prominently as other chemicals. This suggests that we ought to be looking at it more closely." EPA researchers found that a blood level of 3 mcg/dL was associated with a delay in the onset of puberty of four to six months in African American and Latina girls.

Childhood Lead Poisoning Linked to Osteoporosis

After years of research at the cellular level and in animals, researchers at the University of Rochester believe that lead exposure interferes with bone formation and increases the risk of osteoporosis. As a result, the researchers are conducting a human study to test their finding. They are studying children who have been exposed to lead to determine whether lead

prevents them from attaining peak bone density. More than a dozen University of Rochester researchers, including Dr. Randy Rosier, Chairman of the Department of Orthopaedics, Dr. Regis O'Keefe, Professor of Orthopaedics, and Edward M. Schwarz, Assistant Professor of Center for Musculoskeletal Research, are involved in the study.

While lead exposure is not the cause of all cases of osteoporosis, the researchers point to an array of findings that suggest lead is a culprit in the disease. Exposure to lead causes low bone density in lab animals. In addition, bone fractures in mice with lead induced osteoporosis do not heal properly. The researchers found that lead alters the pathways that bone cells use to transmit or regulate actions. They also reported that lead interferes with a specific bone gene called TRIP. The TRIP gene product directs osteoblasts, cells that play a major role in the building of bone. The University has applied for a patent on the gene as a potential drug target to stimulate bone growth or as a possible gene therapy that could be applied to artificial implants or to fractured bone to enhance healing.

Lead Tied to Hypertension in Women

A study published in the Journal of American Medical Association found that bone loss at menopause can cause elevated blood-lead levels that may increase women's risk of high blood pressure. Lead can accumulate in bones at low levels, and remain there for decades without serious effects. However, researchers found that when aging bones start to thin, lead can leak back into the blood.

Study participants with the highest blood-lead levels (averaging 6.4 mg/dL) were 40 percent more likely to have high blood pressure. This suggests that lead in blood has a damaging

effect on blood pressure even when it's below 10 mg/dL.

High Lead Levels and Mortality

Studies link lead exposure with a number of diseases and disorders, including learning and behavioral disorders, cardiovascular and kidney diseases, decreased fertility, and cancer. Few studies, however, have evaluated the association of lead exposure and mortality in the general population. Researchers Mark Lustberg and Ellen Silbergeld studied the association of lead exposure and mortality in the United States using a national cross-sectional survey of the general population conducted from 1976 to 1980. The researchers concluded that individuals with blood lead levels of 20 to 29 mg/dL in 1976 to 1980 had 46% increased all-cause mortality, 39% increased circulatory mortality, and 68% increased cancer mortality. Mortality for those with blood lead levels of 10 to 19mg/dL was not statistically significant.

To obtain a copy of the article, see <http://archinte.ama-assn.org>. or Archives of Internal Medicine, Vol 161 (21), Nov. 25, 2002. pp. 2443-2449.

Lead Exposure Linked to High Number of Cavities

According to a study by University of Rochester dental researchers, lead exposure likely makes teeth in certain groups of people more susceptible to cavities. The research team studied cavity susceptibility in rats born to mothers exposed to lead and compared them to rats born to mothers who were not exposed to lead. While lead does not actually cause cavities, it appears to make rats, and thus people, whose teeth form cavities in an identical manner, much more susceptible to cavities. The study, funded by the National Institute of Research, is the first to document the link between lead exposure and high cavity rates.

Find the full article at JAMA, Vol. 281 No. 24, pp.2294-2298

Study Finds Single Professional Cleaning Not Enough to Reduce Lead Dust

Researchers found that a single professional cleaning of dust and debris without addressing potential sources of lead dust, such as deteriorated lead-based paint, or repeating the cleaning is unlikely to result in significant and sustained reductions in dust lead loadings. One-time professional cleaning of lead-contaminated dust and debris was conducted in thirty-seven units with deteriorated lead-based paint and dust lead hazards. Dust lead loading measurements were taken prior to cleaning, immediately after cleaning (i.e., clearance), and six-months, one-, two- and three-years post-intervention. The cleaning intervention significantly reduced dust lead loadings on floors, windowsills, and window troughs immediately following the work. However, these reductions did not persist at six-months and one-year post-intervention.

These results demonstrate the need for more extensive interventions that address deteriorated lead-based paint. Though more expensive, the interventions are likely to provide longer term reductions in dust lead loadings. Cleaning strategies, however, may be useful in emergency situations to reduce lead dust hazards when paint repair and other

lead hazard control activities cannot be done immediately.

The research article was published in the Journal of Applied and Occupational Hygiene, 18 (2), 138-143.

Funding Opportunities

Cook County Lead Poisoning Prevention Grant Program

The second year of the Cook County Lead-Based Paint Hazard Control Grant Program (Torrens dollars) is underway. The program was established following passage of the Lead Abatement - Torrens Act Fund in the 90th Illinois General Assembly. The Act allows the county to utilize excess funds from its Torrens indemnity fund to conduct lead abatement and/or mitigation activities on eligible residential dwellings built before 1978 and develop outreach and educational programs to prevent lead poisoning.

Application kits for the program will be available shortly on the County's Lead Poisoning Prevention Unit's website www.ccdphlead.org

For more information or referrals on lead poisoning prevention efforts:

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www.luc.edu/schools/law/centers/childlaw/special.html

