

Reducing Childhood Lead Poisoning Rates



Approximately half a million U.S. children 0 to 6 years of age have blood lead levels at or above 5 micrograms per deciliter (µg/dL). No safe blood lead level in children has been identified. High blood lead levels not only damage physical health but also reduce IQ, increase rates of juvenile delinquency, and contribute to decreased lifetime earnings. To prevent childhood lead poisoning, the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** funded 29 states, 5 cities, and the District of Columbia to

- build and strengthen lead surveillance systems, allowing for the identification of neighborhoods and populations of children disproportionately affected by high blood lead levels,
- educate parents and clinical providers in target areas with messages about the importance of blood lead testing for children under 6 years of age, and
- collaborate with institutional and community-based partners to initiate, promote, and evaluate childhood lead poisoning prevention activities.

Each funded jurisdiction works to eliminate childhood lead poisoning by creatively targeting resources and implementing effective program initiatives.

RHODE ISLAND

An estimated 80% of Rhode Island homes were built before 1978 and likely contain lead-based paint hazards

In 2011, four core* cities in Rhode Island reported having three times the number of children with high blood lead levels compared to other Rhode Island cities and towns

Rhode Island law requires healthcare providers to conduct at least two blood lead screening tests on all children by 3 years of age

SUCCESS

CHALLENGE: In Rhode Island, the most highly concentrated source of lead in children’s environments comes from lead-based paint hazards found in residences built before 1978. Property renovations to these homes create lead dust hazards when disturbing surfaces with lead paint—even those painted decades ago.

SOLUTION: In 2011, Rhode Island became the first New England state granted authority to continue its state Remodeler/Renovator Program under the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s 2010 Lead-Based Paint Renovation, Repair and Painting (RRP) Rule. The rule requires workers* to be certified and trained in the use of lead-safe work practices, and requires renovation, repair, and painting firms to be licensed by the department of health.

RESULTS: 2012 was the first full year of the program. Compared to 2012, in 2013 there were

- 225 fewer children in Rhode Island with elevated blood levels.
- 128 fewer cases of children had elevated blood levels in Providence (one of the four core cities).
- 180 cases of RRP violations were prosecuted by the Providence City Solicitor’s Office for failure to obtain lead-safe certificates for rental units.

“In the City of Providence, there are few as urgent and preventable health issues for our children than lead poisoning” – Mayor Angel Taveras

*Healthy Housing Data Book 2012: A report from the Healthy Housing Collaborative. Rhode Island Department of Health. www.health.ri.gov/publications/databooks/2012HealthyHousing.pdf

Additional Resources:

State of Rhode Island Department of Health. Lead Safe Renovation, Repair, and Painting. www.health.ri.gov/healthrisks/poisoning/lead/about/renovationrepairandpainting/index.php

State of Rhode Island Department of Health. Childhood Lead Poisoning. www.health.ri.gov/data/childhoodleadpoisoning/

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Lead Renovation, Repair and Painting Program Rules. www.epa.gov/lead/lead-renovation-repair-and-painting-program-rules

Photo obtained from the CDC Public Health Image Library (<http://phil.cdc.gov/phil/home.asp>). Photo Credit: Scott Housley.

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