



State of New Jersey

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October 17, 2008

TO: Chief School Administrators
Charter School Lead Persons
Nonpublic School Administrators
School Principals

FROM: Lucille E. Davy
Commissioner

SUBJECT: National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week

New Jersey's childhood lead poisoning problem is among the worst in the nation. Approximately two million houses in the state were constructed prior to the national ban on the sale of lead-based paint in 1978, and many children are, therefore, potentially exposed to dangerous levels of lead. Children become lead poisoned by ingesting lead-based paint chips, dirt containing lead, or food from improperly glazed pottery. Lead is also found in dust, water, and, as recent news reports are revealing, toys.

Lead poisoning can cause developmental disabilities, behavioral problems, decreased IQ, and other neurological impairments that affect a child's ability to learn. As it is National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week, I would like us to take the opportunity to educate parents about lead poisoning. Attached you will find a hand-out, created by the Department of Health and Senior Services, entitled "An Important Message About Lead Poisoning From Your Child's School." This hand-out focuses on the effects of lead poisoning on the school-aged child and recommends actions for schools and parents to take to better serve a lead poisoned child and his/her learning needs. Please place your school name at the top and send home with or mail to every school child within the next two months. This hand-out should also be distributed to teachers, administrators, guidance counselors, and nurses.

Finally, flyers in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Hindi, Arabic, Portuguese, and Creole, which describe the dangers of lead poisoning and how to get children tested can be downloaded from http://www.state.nj.us/publicadvocate/public/issues/lead_main.html.

Thank you for your continued effort to help prevent lead poisoning and respond effectively to the needs of lead poisoned children.

LED/SM/BS/pp:leaddoeltr4

Attachment

c: Willa Spicer

John Hart

Senior Staff

Susan Martz

Executive County Superintendents

Garden State Coalition of Schools

LEE Group

Non Public Advisory Council

An Important Message About Lead Poisoning From Your Child's School

Place contact information here

Why is New Jersey concerned about lead poisoning?

New Jersey has some of the oldest homes in the United States. One in three homes was built before 1978. Lead-based paint was banned in 1978. Old homes means old paint. Old paint that is chipping and peeling is a source of lead exposure. Also, dust created when renovating or remodeling.



Why is your child's school concerned about lead poisoning?

Although children 6 to 29 months old are at highest risk for lead poisoning, the effects may not appear until children start school.

The effects may include:

- hyperactivity
- aggression
- attention deficits
- lowered intelligence
- decreased hand-eye coordination
- longer reaction times
- speech and hearing problems, and
- difficulty acquiring language skills.

Some lead poisoned children may need in-classroom supports (for example, classroom seating away from distractions) or special education services.

Why should parents be concerned about lead poisoning?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines lead poisoning as a blood lead level of 10 ug/dL (micrograms per deciliter) or more. However, research has shown that even at lower blood lead levels, lead can affect your child's ability to learn.



What can school personnel and parents do?

L:

- **Learn** more about lead poisoning.
 - Know that very young children are growing quickly and lead affects their developing brains.
 - Lead poisoning's effects are permanent and may not show up until children are school-aged.

E:

- **Establish** communication between teachers and parents to assure that children affected by lead receive in-classroom supports and, if needed, special education services.
- **Educate** all children to always wash their hands before eating and after playing outside to reduce exposure to lead dust that can be found in older homes and schools.
- **Ensure** that all contractors and school maintenance workers use lead-safe work practices when renovating or remodeling homes and schools.

A:

- **Advocate** for children affected by lead by arranging diagnostic evaluations by private practitioners (for example, pediatric neurologist) or through the school-based Child Study Team at critical points in affected children's development.
 - First Grade: Children begin to learn basic skills such as reading words and performing math.
 - Fourth Grade: Classroom emphasis shifts from learning basic skills to learning new material.
 - Seventh Grade: Students are expected to use higher-order planning and organizational skills to complete long-term projects.
- **Assessment** should be done by the preschool and elementary grades' school nurses on all incoming children's medical records to identify previous lead test results or for a history of lead poisoning.
- **Assure** that children are tested at the correct ages. A blood lead test is the only way to know a child has lead poisoning.
 - New Jersey law requires that all children be tested at ages 1 and 2 years.
 - Children 3 to 6 years should be tested if they have never had a blood lead test.
 - Parents should take their children to their healthcare provider to get a blood lead test.
 - Free or low-cost testing is available from local health departments or Federally Qualified Health Centers for children with no insurance or whose insurance does not cover blood lead testing.

D:

- **Determine** if children are offered healthy foods with calcium and iron at meals and snack times. These foods help the body get rid of lead. These foods include low-fat milk and yogurt, lean meats, beans, and fortified juices and cereals.
- **Developmental** assessments should be ongoing for lead poisoned children.

To learn more about childhood lead poisoning prevention contact:

New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services
call: 609-292-5666

or visit these websites

www.state.nj.us/health/fhs/newborn/lead.shtml.

www.leadsafenj.org.