TOXIC LEAD

Candidates for PA State Office Must Act to Protect Children

Did You Know?

- Lead can seriously harm a child's health and cause well-documented adverse effects such as damage to the brain and nervous system, slowed growth, development and learning and behavior, hearing and speech problems – which can cause lower IQ, decreased ability to pay attention and under-performance in school often requiring special education services.[i] Research also demonstrates that childhood lead exposure is a risk factor for criminal behavior, including violent crime, in adulthood.[ii]
- Yet for every dollar spent on removing lead paint-based hazards in children's homes and apartments, $17–$221 would be returned in health benefits, increased IQ, higher lifetime earnings, tax revenue, reduced spending on special education, and reduced criminal activity.[iii]

What does Pennsylvania's lead poisoning crisis look like?

- Nearly 9,000 children are poisoned every year[iv] – enough to fill the Pennsylvania Farm Show Complex & Expo Center to maximum capacity.
- PA children are poisoned at a rate 2.3 higher than children poisoned in Flint, Michigan at the peak of the city's crisis.[v,vi]
- In PA, lead-based paint hazards in children's homes are the main source of lead poisoning. Lead-based paint was not banned for residential use until 1978, and PA ranks 5th in the nation for old housing stock with 70% of residential units built before 1980.[vii]
- African American and Hispanic children are disproportionately poisoned because they are more likely to live in older properties with deteriorated lead-based paint. In PA, nearly 5 times more Black children and 2 times more Hispanic children are poisoned than white children.[viii]

Call to Action!

Childhood lead poisoning is 100% preventable – primarily by removing lead paint-based hazards in their homes. **When you get into office, families in your district are counting on you to protect their babies from toxic lead.**

We need you to:

- Fund removal of lead paint from children's homes.
- Guarantee every PA child is appropriately tested for lead as per Centers for Disease Control requirements.

One Family's Story:

Kevin is a rambunctious 5-year-old starting kindergarten, Sarah is his 2-year-old sister, and John is the youngest of the bunch at just 1-year-old. All three live with their mom, Denise, in Chester. Denise noticed that Sarah was not progressing in the same way that Kevin did when he was her age. She was slower to speak and seemed unable to pay attention when they read books together. Denise took Sarah to the doctor who recognized these symptoms as developmental delays. Because the family was covered by Medicaid, which requires blood lead testing for all children at ages one and two, Sarah and John were tested for lead and Kevin got a follow-up test as well. All three kids had elevated blood lead levels, and Sarah's was especially high at 19 ug/dL, nearly four times higher than the CDC's threshold for poisoning. Her pediatrician contacted her Medicaid health plan to send a lead inspection team to test the family's home, which Denise described as more than 50 years old and in significant disrepair with holes in the roof and peeling paint inside and out. There are no medications to cure Denise's children and reverse any damage done. The number one 'treatment' for Sarah and her siblings is to stop being exposed to lead hazards and remove the toxic lead from their home.

Created by the Pennsylvania Prenatal to Age Three Collaborative.
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[i] Centers for Disease Control, (2020). https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/prevention/health-effects.htm

[ii] Wright JP, Dietrich KN, Ris MD, Hornung RW, Wessel SD, Lanphear BP, et al. (2008) Association of Prenatal and Childhood Blood Lead Concentrations with Criminal Arrests in Early Adulthood. PLoS Med 5(5): e101. doi:10.1371/journal.pmed.0050101. https://journals.plos.org/plosmedicine/article/file?id=10.1371/journal.pmed.0050101&type=printable

[iii] Gould, E. (2009). Childhood Lead Poisoning: Conservative Estimates of the Social and Economic Benefits of Lead Hazard Control. *Environ. Health Perspect. 117(7): 1162-1167.*

[iv] Pennsylvania Department of Public Health, Childhood Lead Surveillance Annual Reports. https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/Lead%20Poisoning/Pages/Lead-Surveillance.aspx

[v] S. Frostenson. (February 3, 2016). 18 cities in Pennsylvania reported higher levels of lead exposure than Flint. Vox. https://www.vox.com/2016/2/3/10904120/lead-exposure-flint-pennsylvania.

[vi] Pennsylvania Department of Public Health, (2020). 2018 Childhood Lead Surveillance Annual Report. https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/Documents/Environmental%20Health/2018%20Childhood%20Lead%20Surveillance%20Annual%20Report.pdf.

[vii] US Census.

[viii] Pennsylvania Department of Public Health, (2020). 2018 Childhood Lead Surveillance Annual Report. https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/Documents/Environmental%20Health/2018%20Childhood%20Lead%20Surveillance%20Annual%20Report.pdf.