



State of Wisconsin
Department of Health and Family Services

Jim Doyle, Governor
Karen E. Timberlake, Secretary

May 2008

I am pleased to present the *Legacy of Lead* report. This report provides valuable details about how we can use our current knowledge about the causes of childhood lead poisoning, along with an understanding of the housing in our communities, to focus our efforts to eliminate childhood lead poisoning. Ending this tragedy will require the collective efforts of many people and organizations.

The most compelling messages in this report are that childhood lead poisoning is highly destructive; it is preventable; it costs us all. Childhood lead poisoning continues to be a serious problem throughout our state; it threatens the health and long term well being of children. The health, learning and behavioral effects of childhood lead poisoning can persist throughout a person's lifetime. These effects exact a toll not only on individuals but on our society through increased expenses for medical care, special education, juvenile and adult correctional programs, local government case management interventions, lifelong loss of earnings, higher private health care insurance premiums and increased government expenses for Medicaid. With each poisoning that we prevent, we not only avoid unnecessary human tragedy, but the savings are estimated to be \$40,000 - \$50,000 per child.

Children living in Wisconsin are at higher risk for lead poisoning than children living in most other states. Much of the problem with childhood lead poisoning stems from Wisconsin's high percentage of older homes. One-quarter of our housing stock is made up of homes built before 1950, when lead-based paint was widely used. These homes are responsible for two-thirds of the childhood lead poisonings in Wisconsin. Fixing the lead paint hazards in these older homes would go far toward eliminating the primary lead poisoning threat to Wisconsin children.

I hope this report will serve as a blueprint as we work together to eliminate childhood lead poisoning in Wisconsin. I encourage you to contact the Wisconsin Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program (608-266-5817) with your questions and ideas. By working together, we can do the right thing for all our children and our state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen E. Timberlake". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Karen E. Timberlake
Secretary