

# Mobilizing Action for Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Week in Your Community

Brought to you by the Wisconsin Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program,  
Division of Public Health, Department of Health and Family Services

October 21-27, 2007, is National Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Week.

We encourage you to use this opportunity to join with your partners to celebrate the gains you have made in reducing childhood lead poisoning and energize them to confront the challenges ahead.



Since 1996 more than 40,000 children in Wisconsin have been identified with lead poisoning. In 2006 the number was 2,111 children. Between May and August 2007 an average of 5 new children were identified with lead poisoning per day. That is unacceptable!

Lead from old paint poisons children and reduces their future potential. The harm is devastating to our communities and society as a whole; it is entirely preventable.

This year during Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Week we want to focus on reaching out to leaders of our communities, such as elected officials, the media and others to engage them in eliminating lead hazards in old housing.

We can help your efforts. We can provide data and information tailored to your community or to the leaders you plan to contact. Call the Wisconsin Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program at 608/266-5817 if you would like more information.

For more information on the materials in this kit, please contact Reghan Walsh, 608/261-9432, or [walshro@dhfs.state.wi.us](mailto:walshro@dhfs.state.wi.us).



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Date: September 21, 2007

To: Local Public Health Departments Directors and Lead Poisoning Prevention Program Staff  
Local Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Advocates

From: Sheri Johnson, Ph.D., Administrator   
Tom Sieger, Deputy Administrator, Division of Public Health

RE: Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Week, October 21-27, 2007

Lead hurts children and we want to prevent exposure before it happens. We've experienced a decline in lead poisoning by reducing lead hazards in some Wisconsin homes, but we need to do more. Just since last May another 647 children have been newly identified with lead poisoning—that's *five* children per day. Prevention and testing are key to protecting our children.

Eliminating childhood lead poisoning is a top priority of the Division of Public Health. To achieve elimination of lead poisoning we must reduce the risk to children by fixing the houses and enacting protective measures that remain in place for years to come. We need the collective efforts of our local partners to reach this goal.

Since 2004 Wisconsin has been implementing a plan to eliminate childhood lead poisoning. Progress made on this plan is monitored by the Wisconsin Childhood Lead Poisoning Elimination Plan Implementation and Oversight Committee. This committee has called for action on the local level to inform policymakers of the dangers of lead poisoning and what is needed to prevent it. Local agencies and coalitions can create momentum locally that has an impact statewide.

To help you generate action locally, the Wisconsin Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program has developed a *Mobilizing Action for Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Week* kit. In this kit you will find tools and resources that can help you form your local action plan.

We encourage you to reach out to your elected officials and others who have the ability to make change in your community or state to bring about the elimination of childhood lead poisoning in Wisconsin. Please take this opportunity to act on behalf of the children of Wisconsin.

**Mobilizing Action for Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention (CLPP) Week  
October 21 - 27, 2007**

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## **How to Use the Materials in the *Mobilizing Action for Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Week kit***

Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention (CLPP) Week is October 21 – 27, 2007. Childhood lead poisoning is a public health issue that is entirely preventable and the solutions must be housing-based. The resources needed to fix old housing to prevent lead poisoning must come from commitments by the leaders of our communities, state and nation.

### **Objective for 2007 CLPP Week**

Plan and conduct a statewide, focused campaign that mobilizes existing partners to target those with the greatest power to create change by fixing old housing to eliminate lead poisoning.

Target policymakers, media, government officials, etc. and provide them with:

- Concise information about the dangers and huge social impact of lead poisoning,
- Practical information / resources to help them understand the problem,
- Clear action steps they need to take to make a difference.

### **CLPP Week Action Plan Suggestions**

Your local action campaign is determined by you. Whatever energy you can create for eliminating lead poisoning is important. As you think about what your action plan will be, consider some of these suggestions.

- Members of your coalition may select from the talking points provided in a later section and craft a letter to local policymakers—mayor, city council members, board of health. This letter could include information about the seriousness of lead poisoning, societal costs, local data, and ask the recipient to do something specific to address the problem. You could ask them to meet to discuss with you the problem in more depth, to come to your next coalition meeting or write a letter of commitment when applying for lead hazard reduction funds.
  
- Members of your coalition could make an appointment to meet with the editorial board of your local newspaper to discuss doing a series of articles on lead poisoning in your community. The local health officer could prepare an Op/Ed piece (see next section) to include in the local newspaper. Members of your coalition could respond in kind with letters to the editor, bringing various perspectives to the discussion. Remember that the newspaper may receive and print letters that don't support lead poisoning prevention. Be ready to respond in a way that then allows you to get your key messages back out to the readers.

- ❑ Have families who come to the health department or agency for services, e.g., blood lead testing or WIC, fill out a postcard to their legislator or mayor (see next section), asking them to support any efforts to create lead-safe housing in their community. Then the agency can mail the postcards so they arrive during CLPP Week. A letter explaining the lead poisoning issues and solutions could be sent by the agency to the same legislator or mayor to provide more detail.
- ❑ Across Wisconsin local health departments hold legislative breakfasts with area legislators to discuss relevant public health issues. Consider requesting to be on the agenda for the next legislative breakfast in your area and share local data on the impact of lead poisoning, such as the number of children that have been affected by lead poisoning and number of pre-1950 built dwellings that could contain lead hazards.

## **Getting Your CLPP Week Action Plan Started**

**STEP 1:** Decide who your target audience will be: legislator, mayor, city council, board of health members, local newspaper editorial board, area radio station.

**STEP 2:** Decide what you want your intended audience to do. For example:

- Create more lead-safe housing in the community,
- Strengthen local ordinances and building codes to require that paint in properties be maintained in intact condition,
- Raise the awareness of the community through a series of news items (articles or features on radio station) about lead poisoning.

Or simply suggest that you have a number of ideas to discuss at a follow-up meeting.

**STEP 3:** Decide who your partners will be in this effort: your local lead poisoning prevention coalition, health and housing agencies, parents with young children affected by lead poisoning or those which come to the health department for services.

**STEP 4:** Decide who will do which steps of the action plan: coordinate details, write letters, make appointments with target audience, get local data to support discussion.

**STEP 5:** Swing into action!!

**STEP 6:** Join us on a **follow-up conference call on November 15<sup>th</sup> at 1:30pm** to discuss the outcomes and the next steps to keep momentum going.

## **Materials to Support Your Local Action Plan**

In the next two sections we provide the following tools:

- (1) Sample letters and other materials with guidance for effective use, and
- (2) Key messages and talking points about lead poisoning in Wisconsin.

You will see in this section that the sample letters make use of the key messages and talking points provided in the following section. Feel free to use the letters as is, but we recommend tailoring them to your organization or to the role you play in preventing childhood lead poisoning. A legislator will pay more attention to individual letters raising a number of lead-related issues than to the same exact letter from a number of individuals. These tools can be used throughout the year to enhance your outreach efforts.

### **Guidance for Effective Use of Letters and Other Materials**

#### Letter to a local policy maker

We tend to think our local leaders are aware of childhood lead poisoning in our communities. More often than not, they are not aware of the extent of the lead poisoning problem and how it affects the community at large. Compose a letter that includes societal costs backed up with local data to create a sense of ownership of the problem. Data could include the number of children lead-poisoned, number of pre-1950 dwellings in community, or mention a neighborhood where there is a lot of old housing in poor condition. Ask to meet and discuss something concrete--something that the policy maker has the power to act on.

#### Letter to a state or federal representative

Wisconsin ranks in the top ten in the nation for the number of children poisoned by lead. Your legislator may not know this nor know the extent of the problem in your community. When asked about the best way to engage legislators in the discussion, we are told that providing information about the need (using hard data) is good practice. Data informs your representatives and then they are prepared to join in the discussion when the opportunity arises. Consider writing a letter that explains the cost of lead poisoning (see the talking points for societal costs and violent crime) and what it will take to prevent it. Share local data (GIS maps, numbers of children affected and pre-1950 dwellings). If contacting a federal representative, use data for both your area and the State. [To find your representative go to: <http://waml.legis.state.wi.us/>.]

#### Opinion/editorial piece for a local newspaper

Use an Op/Ed piece in the local newspaper to inform and challenge readers to think seriously about the issue of lead poisoning and what can be done. Timely, well-written provocative opinions on topics of local interest are usually given first preference for

publication. This may be best written by someone in the community responsible for the health of children, for example, public health agency director, president of the local board of health, or community physician. In the last section of this kit, we have included a recent Opinion/Editorial that State Health Officer Dr. Sheri Johnson wrote following the decision in the Milwaukee lead paint lawsuit. Please use this as an example of how an Op/Ed piece can be written that is persuasive and challenging.

#### Letter to the Editor of a local newspaper

Newspaper “letters to the editor” are usually short comments that make one simple point. They are usually in response to something that has appeared on the Op/Ed page, an editorial, or some information that has appeared in a news story.

Newspapers get many more letters than they can run, so keep your letter short (less than 250 words). Keep paragraphs short as well—one to two sentences per paragraph. Stay positive—acknowledge the source that you are responding to and use the opportunity to get your message heard. Use local information—more likely to be printed by the newspaper. Write simply—write it as you would speak, walk away, come back later and re-read, edit it and send it in. From Mike Flaherty of *Flaherty & Associates, Inc.*

#### Postcard template for parent action

Legislators getting a postcard, or many postcards, from parents concerned about their child’s vulnerability to lead poisoning can be a powerful communication strategy. To make it as simple and do-able as possible, have the postcards ready for parents to fill out while waiting for an appointment at the WIC or other clinic or at a HeadStart agency. You can suggest some language that could be put on the cards, such as “Dear Representative (name here): My child was tested for lead poisoning today at the WIC clinic. Wisconsin (or local community) needs more lead-safe housing to protect young children.” Parents can sign the card and leave it with the agency to be addressed and mailed to the appropriate representative.

**On the next few pages are the sample letters.** These are just suggestions--you can use the talking points starting on page 15 to craft your own particular message.

## Sample Letter to a Local Policymaker

Dear Mayor [name here]:

The week of October 21 to 27, 2007 is dedicated to childhood lead poisoning prevention. Did you know that in our community, more than [#] children have been affected by lead poisoning over the last ten years? Did you know that we have [#] houses built before 1950 when paint still contained a lot of lead and only a fraction have been corrected for lead hazards?

Lead hurts kids. It interferes with the normal development of a child's brain, and can result in lower IQ and a greater likelihood of behavior problems like aggression and hyperactivity and problems in school. Scientific studies show that juvenile delinquency and the most violent crimes committed by adults are strongly associated with children's earlier lead poisoning.

I've been told by experts that for every child who gets exposed to lead hazards, we can count on spending approximately \$45,000 per child in costs to deal with the effects of lead poisoning. This includes lost wages for the child over the lifetime and financial costs for special education, juvenile delinquency and medical care. That's a lot of money and it doesn't need to happen; lead poisoning is entirely preventable.

Chipping and peeling paint creates dust on windows, floors and porches. Children get the dust on their hands and it gets into their mouths. We must fix the old houses with chipping and peeling paint to protect young children.

We need to come together as a community and find ways to fix the old housing in [city/county]. We can explore options to keep our old housing in good repair, such as strengthening our local ordinance or building codes to require that paint be maintained in intact condition. Other communities in Wisconsin have done this. We can too.

There has been a lot of media attention to toys and other products containing lead. The more serious problem in Wisconsin and [city/country] is our old housing with chipping and peeling paint. Please meet with me and others from the [coalition name] to discuss what more we can be doing in [city/county] to protect our children. I can be reached at (XXX) xxx-xxxx.

Sincerely,

[name here]



## Sample Letter to a State or Federal Representative

The Honorable [first name] [last name]  
The Capitol, Room [#]  
Madison, Wisconsin 53702

Dear Senator [last name]:

October 21 to 27, 2007 is Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Week. I am writing to you today to make you aware of the seriousness of childhood lead poisoning in Wisconsin and our district.

Since 1996, more than 40,000 children have been found to be lead poisoned in Wisconsin. In 2006 more than 2,000 children were lead poisoned. From May to August of this year, 647 new children were found to be lead poisoned—that's an average of **five new children per day**. In District [#], [#] children have been affected by lead poisoning since 1996.

Lead poisoning has tragic consequences for children and their families. Lead hurts kids. It interferes with the normal development of a child's brain, and can result in lower IQ and a greater likelihood of behavior problems like aggression and hyperactivity and problems in school. Scientific studies show that juvenile delinquency and the most violent crimes committed by adults are strongly associated with children's earlier lead poisoning.

Lead poisoning is also costly to our community and society as a whole. Costs for lead poisoning are estimated at \$45,000 per child to deal with the effects of lead poisoning. This includes lost wages for the child over the lifetime and financial costs for special education, juvenile delinquency and medical care. Just for the children in our area who have already been found to be poisoned that is \$[#].

The injustice is that lead poisoning is entirely preventable. In Wisconsin, the main source of lead exposure is the dust resulting from chipping and peeling lead-based paint in homes built before 1950. By fixing our old homes, we could prevent more children from being poisoned.

More than 466,000 homes built before 1950 are estimated to have lead paint hazards in Wisconsin. At the current pace of fixing these old homes it will take another 40 years to make them all lead-safe.

We need your help. We need to find ways to increase the pace of fixing our old homes so our children can grow up lead-free. We can't wait 40 more years to protect our children.

More information about lead poisoning can be found at <http://dhfs.wi.gov/lead>. I'd like to talk with you more about this dilemma. Please contact me at xxx/xxx-xxxx so we can discuss this further.

Sincerely,

[name here]

## Opinion/Editorial Piece for a Local Newspaper

See an example of an Opinion/Editorial in the final section, *Additional Materials to Support Your Efforts*. It was written by State Health Officer Dr. Sheri Johnson in response to the “not guilty” verdict in the City of Milwaukee lead paint lawsuit against National Lead Industries, Inc in June 2007, to raise awareness of the lead poisoning issue and who needs to do more to protect kids.

You can use the talking points provided in the next section or Dr. Johnson’s piece in the last section to craft your own Editorial. Opinion/Editorials can be 600-750 words so you can include more of the detailed information provided in the talking points that otherwise would be difficult to fit into a one page letter.

### Sample Letter to the Editor

For example: In response to a toy recall.

Dear Editor:

There has been a lot of media attention on children's toys and products that contain dangerous amounts of lead. While lead in toys and consumer products is a serious problem it would be a huge missed opportunity if we lose the message that lead paint hazards in housing remain the most important exposure source for children in the U.S. Certainly, other lead sources contribute to children's total lead exposure, but these sources are dwarfed by lead paint as the main cause of serious lead poisonings for most children.

Media interest focuses on these other sources when there is a product recall, while largely ignoring the millions of homes that contain far more serious lead paint hazards day after day, year after year.

Let's fix the houses and protect our children.

Sincerely,

[name here]

## Postcard Template for Parent Action

A hand-written note from a parent can be very persuasive. Print the postcards (see the next two pages) with the picture on one side and the message on the other side. Print the postcards in color on white card stock type paper for the biggest impression. However if resources are scarce, the postcards can be printed in black and white.

**Lead Hurts Kids!**



**Fix Our Old Houses to Prevent Lead Poisoning.**

**Lead Hurts Kids!**



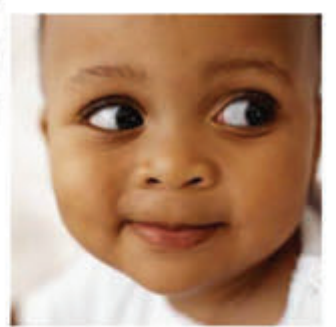
**Fix Our Old Houses to Prevent Lead Poisoning.**

**Lead Hurts Kids!**



**Fix Our Old Houses to Prevent Lead Poisoning.**

**Lead Hurts Kids!**



**Fix Our Old Houses to Prevent Lead Poisoning.**

**Childhood Lead Poisoning  
Prevention Week is October  
21 – 27, 2007.**

To:

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To:

**Section regarding Talking Points and Key Messages about Childhood Lead Poisoning in Wisconsin  
(pp. 16 – 27)**

## **Talking Points and Key Messages about Childhood Lead Poisoning in Wisconsin**

When composing a letter, speaking to the media, or carrying on a discussion with a policy maker, your message is clearer and more consistent if you use talking points and key messages.

We have developed talking points and key messages around a number of issues connected to lead poisoning. You can choose from among these to make the statement you want.

Effects of Lead Exposure on Children

What Childhood Lead Poisoning Costs Wisconsin

Lead Poisoning and Violent Crime

Burden of Lead Poisoning on Wisconsin's Educational System

The Cost of Fixing the Houses with Lead Paint Hazards

Toys/Products Recalled as Lead Hazards

Key Messages about Eliminating Childhood Lead Poisoning

Talking points are referenced where necessary.



## Effects of Lead Exposure on Children

- Lead hurts children.
- Lead interferes with the normal development of a young child's brain.
  - Lead poisoning can result in lowering the child's IQ, cause attention disorders, developmental delays and reduce the child's growth.
  - Lead poisoning is associated with a greater likelihood of behavior problems like aggression and hyperactivity<sup>1</sup>.
  - A lead-poisoned child is more likely to experience problems in school due to learning difficulties, poor reading skills<sup>2</sup> and shortened attention span.
  - Studies show that lead exposure leads to higher rates of high school dropout, teen pregnancy<sup>3</sup>, and juvenile delinquency<sup>3</sup>.
  - Scientific studies show that the most violent crimes committed by adults are strongly associated with children's earlier lead poisoning<sup>3</sup>.
- Children under the age of six are most vulnerable to the effects of lead due to rapid brain development in this phase of life.
- In extreme cases lead poisoning can cause coma, seizures or death. In 2006, a Minnesota child died from lead poisoning after swallowing a charm that later was found to be 99% lead.
- A child with lead poisoning most often show no signs of being poisoned.
- The only way to know if a child is lead poisoned is through a blood lead test.
- There is no safe level of lead in the human body.
- Lead in the body can negatively impact health throughout the child's life<sup>4</sup>.
  - Childhood lead poisoning increases the risk of death from stroke and heart attack as adults.
  - Studies have also shown that childhood lead exposure is linked to adult kidney disease, diabetes and cognitive deficits such as memory loss and Alzheimer's disease.

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<sup>1</sup> Delinquency and hyperactivity (1979). DR Offord, K Sullivan, N Allen, *Journal of Nervous Mental Disorders*, **167**: 734-741.

<sup>2</sup> Low level exposure and children's IQ: A meta-analysis and search for a threshold (1994). J Schwartz, *Environmental Research*.

<sup>3</sup> How lead exposure relates to temporal changes in IQ, violent crime, and unwed pregnancy (2000). *Environmental Research Section A*, **83**, pp. 1-22.

<sup>4</sup> The Weight of Lead: Effects add up in Adults (2007). Angela Spivey, *Environmental Health Perspectives*, 115 (1).

## What Childhood Lead Poisoning Costs Wisconsin

- Childhood lead poisoning is costly to our community and society as a whole.
- Costs for lead poisoning are estimated at \$45,000 per child to deal with the effects of lead poisoning. This includes lost wages for the child over the lifetime and financial costs for special education, juvenile delinquency and medical care.
- Based on a review of the scientific literature<sup>5</sup>, the estimated minimum health benefits of preventing lead poisoning are:

\$21,195	Present value of lost lifetime earnings
1,163	Avoided neonatal mortality
55	Avoided direct medical care
12,833	Avoided special education
2,362	Avoided medical expense for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
<u>+ 8,000</u>	Avoided juvenile delinquency expense
\$45,608	Total average health benefit per child
- For the 40,000 children known to be lead-poisoned since 1996, those costs add up to more than \$1.82 billion for Wisconsin.
- Only about one in five children under the age of 6 are tested for lead poisoning so the actual cost of childhood lead poisoning to Wisconsin could be much higher.

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<sup>5</sup> Benefits and Costs of Residential Lead Paint Hazard Control and Window Replacement in Wisconsin (2006). Prepared for the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services by David E. Jacobs, National Center for Healthy Housing, and Rick Nevin, ICF Consulting.

## Lead Poisoning and Violent Crime

- Research published in 1990<sup>6</sup> by Deborah Denno of the Fordham University School of Law shows that childhood lead poisoning is a powerful predictor of antisocial behavior in 3 basic categories—school disciplinary problems, delinquency and adult criminality.
  - Lead poisoning predisposes people to act in an impulsive, antisocial way.
  - Lead poisoning as a child proved to be the key factor for the most violent offenders, those who committed homicides, rapes, and other violent crimes.
- Lead poisoning researcher Herbert Needleman, professor of child psychiatry and pediatrics at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, says that lead exposure is arguably this county's most preventable cause of antisocial behavior<sup>7</sup>.
- Recent analysis<sup>8</sup> by economist Rick Nevin concluded that childhood lead exposure explained 88 percent of the variation in the violent crime rate in the United States over several decades.

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<sup>6</sup> *Biology and Violence: From Birth to Adulthood* (1990), Deborah W. Denno, Cambridge University Press NY, NY

<sup>7</sup> *Why is Lead Still Poisoning Our Children?* (August 2006). John Pekkenen, [www.Washingtonian.com](http://www.Washingtonian.com)

<sup>8</sup> *How lead exposure relates to temporal changes in IQ, violent crime, and unwed pregnancy* (2000). *Environmental Research Section A*, **83**, pp. 1-22.

## **Burden of Lead Poisoning on Wisconsin's Educational System**

- Lead poisoning places a significant burden on Wisconsin's educational system since lead exposure causes learning disabilities in children.
- Of Wisconsin children who started kindergarten in September 2006, 4.7% were known to be lead poisoned. If there are 20 children in a typical kindergarten class, then it follows that, on average, one child in every kindergarten classroom was lead poisoned before they started school. These students may need special education due to the learning disabilities associated with lead poisoning.
- Wisconsin taxpayers consistently spend over \$300 million per year for special education programs<sup>9</sup>. If Wisconsin could control the special education costs attributable to lead poisoning, such preventive efforts would pay dividends to children, families, school districts, and to all Wisconsin taxpayers.
- Lead poisoning is preventable. We must fix our old houses with lead paint hazards, the most common source of lead poisoning, and reduce the burden on our educational system.

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lfb/informationalpapers/27.pdf>

## The Cost of Fixing the Houses with Lead Paint Hazards

- In 2006, more than 466,000 homes in Wisconsin built before 1950 are estimated<sup>10</sup> to contain lead paint hazards.
- The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development estimates it takes \$8,000 per home on average to fix the lead paint hazards.
- The total needed to fix these Wisconsin homes with lead paint hazards is \$3.7 billion.
- At the current rate of progress of fixing lead paint hazards in Wisconsin housing, it will take more than 40 years to fix all these homes.
- Wisconsin needs to find ways to increase the pace of fixing our old homes. We can't wait 40 more years to protect our children!

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<sup>10</sup> Benefits and Costs of Residential Lead Paint Hazard Control and Window Replacement in Wisconsin (2006). Prepared for the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services by David E. Jacobs, National Center for Healthy Housing, and Rick Nevin, ICF Consulting.

## Toys/Products Recalled as Lead Hazards

- There has been a lot of media attention on children's toys and products that contain dangerous amounts of lead.
- While lead in toys and consumer products is a serious problem it would be a huge missed opportunity if we lose the message that lead paint hazards in housing remain the most important exposure source for children in the U.S.
- Certainly, other lead sources contribute to children's total lead exposure, but these sources are dwarfed by lead paint as the main cause of serious lead poisonings for most children.
- Media interest focuses on these other sources when there is a product recall, while largely ignoring the millions of homes that contain far more serious lead paint hazards day after day, year after year.
- While it is important to remove lead tainted toys, it is also very important to check homes for lead-based paint.
- For more information about lead in products and lead poisoning prevention visit the Lead-Safe Wisconsin website, [dhfs.wisconsin.gov/lead](https://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/lead).

## Key Messages about Eliminating Childhood Lead Poisoning

### Lead Poisoning Key Messages for a Local Community

Use key messages to keep your message about lead poisoning simple, clear, and consistent. Imagine that someone asks you “Is lead poisoning *really* a problem for young children?” You respond with “Yes, lead hurts children and we want to prevent exposure before it happens.” Then you can go right into “Lead Poisoning interferes with a child’s development,” followed by the sub-messages. Practice this often so you are prepared to get your message across regardless of the other person’s agenda.

**OVER-RIDING MESSAGE:** Lead hurts children and we want to prevent exposure before it happens.

#### **Lead poisoning interferes with a child’s development.**

- Lead interferes with the normal development of a child’s brain and can result in lower IQ and a greater likelihood of behavior problems, like aggression, hyperactivity, juvenile delinquency and adult violent crime.
- Children under age 6 are the most vulnerable.
- In [locale] more than [#] children under 6 years of age were found to be lead poisoned in 2006.

#### **Testing children for lead poisoning is very important.**

- A child with lead poisoning most often shows no symptoms of being poisoned.
- The only way to know a child is lead poisoned is through a blood test.
- It’s important to test pre-school age children who are at-risk for lead poisoning because we can intervene and limit damage to a child’s mind and ability to learn.

#### **Prevention is the key to protecting children living in older homes.**

- Chipping and peeling paint in older homes creates dust on windows, floors and porches.
- Children get the dust on their hands and then into their mouths.
- We need to come together as a community and find ways to fix our old housing to protect our children.

#### **[Locale] has had some success in reducing lead poisoning by eliminating lead in some homes.**

- The [locale] Health Department works with other agencies [maybe list some local partners] to prevent lead poisoning.
- We have increased our focus on reducing lead paint hazards in homes built before 1950.
- We are working to (**choose appropriate phrase**: secure additional federal funds for lead hazard reduction; educate more people about how to prevent lead poisoning; provide lead hazard assessment of properties built before 1950).

*Will lead poisoning be eliminated in [community] by the year 2010?*

It's a big goal and we hope to reach it by finding ways to do more. Keeping children healthy and safe is a priority of the [locale] Health Department. We're engaged with housing agencies, physicians, parents, property owners, child care providers, and other organizations that are concerned with the health of young children and families. We're getting the lead poisoning issue on the public's radar screen. We are always looking for new partners who can play an important part in protecting children by eliminating lead poisoning.



## **Additional Resources to Support Your Efforts**

### **On-line resources**

A list of on-line resources that can provide more detailed information to explain the scope of the lead poisoning problem in Wisconsin and the U.S.

### **Examples of GIS Maps**

Examples are provided of GIS maps indicating the connection between old housing and the locations where children have been found to be lead poisoned. These are available for most Wisconsin cities with a population of 10,000 or greater and each state legislative district.

### **Example of a Fact Sheet for Legislators**

An example is provided of a fact sheet for a legislative district with information on the number of children lead-poisoned and the number of pre-1950 dwelling by legislative district. These fact sheets are available for each Senate and Assembly district in Wisconsin.

### **Opinion/Editor Piece by State Health Officer**

In July, 2007, Dr. Sheri Johnson released an Op/Ed piece following the “not guilty” verdict announced in the City of Milwaukee lawsuit against National Lead Industries. The piece provides an example of an Opinion/Editorial that challenges Wisconsin to do more to protect children.

### **Outreach Materials**

The Wisconsin Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program has outreach materials available for non-profit organizations. For more information, please contact Reghan Walsh, 608/261-9432 or [walshro@dhfs.state.wi.us](mailto:walshro@dhfs.state.wi.us).

## On-Line Resources for Information on the Treatment and Prevention of Lead Poisoning

The DHFS Lead-Safe Wisconsin website has information on the status of lead poisoning in Wisconsin, ways to treat and ways to prevent the disease. Data, maps, facts, information pamphlets, and much more can be found at [dhfs.wisconsin.gov/lead](http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/lead).

Some items of interest:

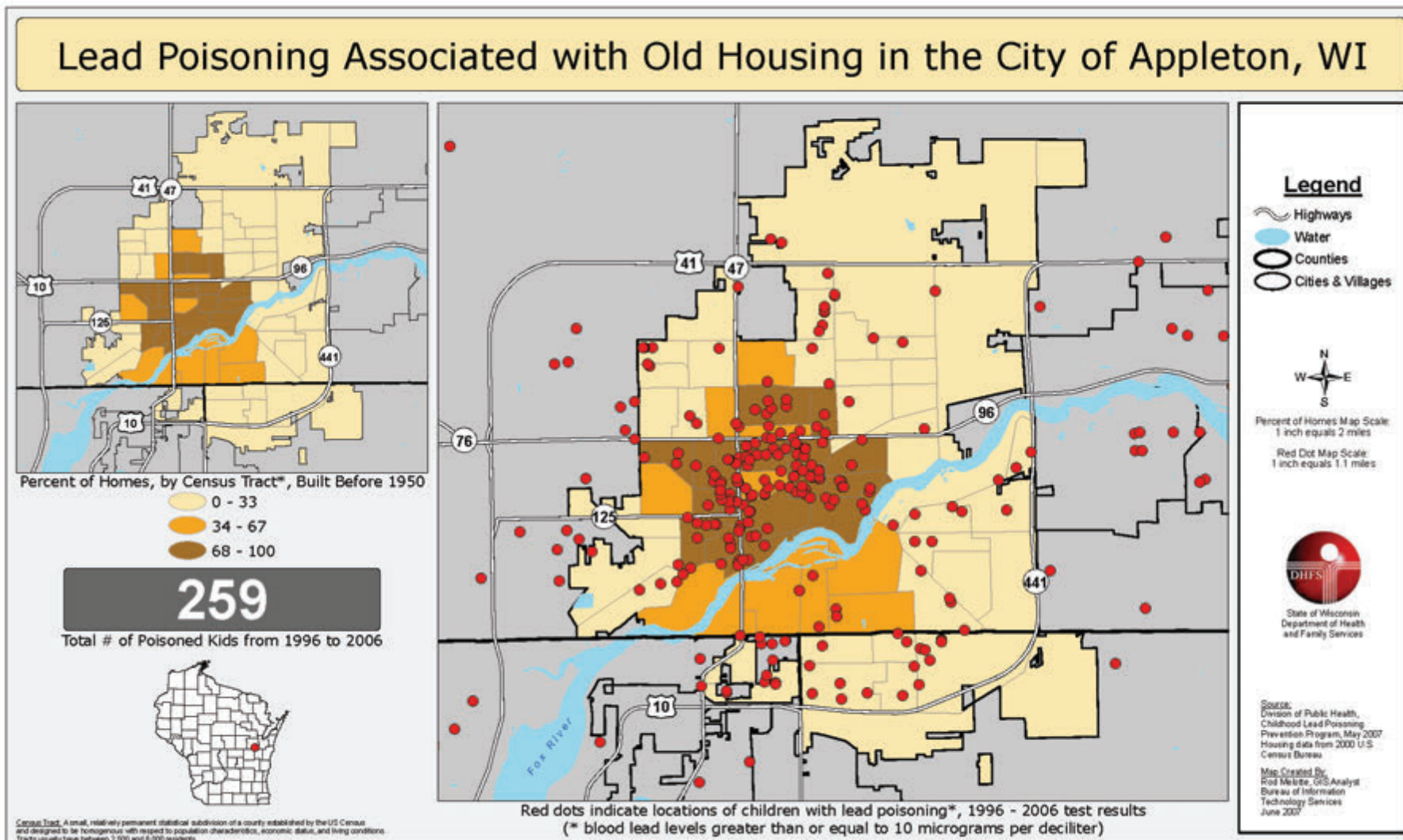
- Lead poisoning risk factors in Wisconsin: socio-economic status, racial and ethnic disparities, age of child, and age of primary residence of lead-poisoned children. ([dhfs.wisconsin.gov/lead/lpsurveillance/index.HTM](http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/lead/lpsurveillance/index.HTM)).
- Information that can be provided to families include the following:
  - ✓ The brochure titled, "Look Out for Lead." ([dhfs.wisconsin.gov/lead/doc/ParentsLeadEng.pdf](http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/lead/doc/ParentsLeadEng.pdf))
  - ✓ A list of consumer products that contain dangerous levels of lead. ([dhfs.wi.gov/lead/LSources\\_Products.HTM](http://dhfs.wi.gov/lead/LSources_Products.HTM))

Other websites with lead poisoning prevention information:

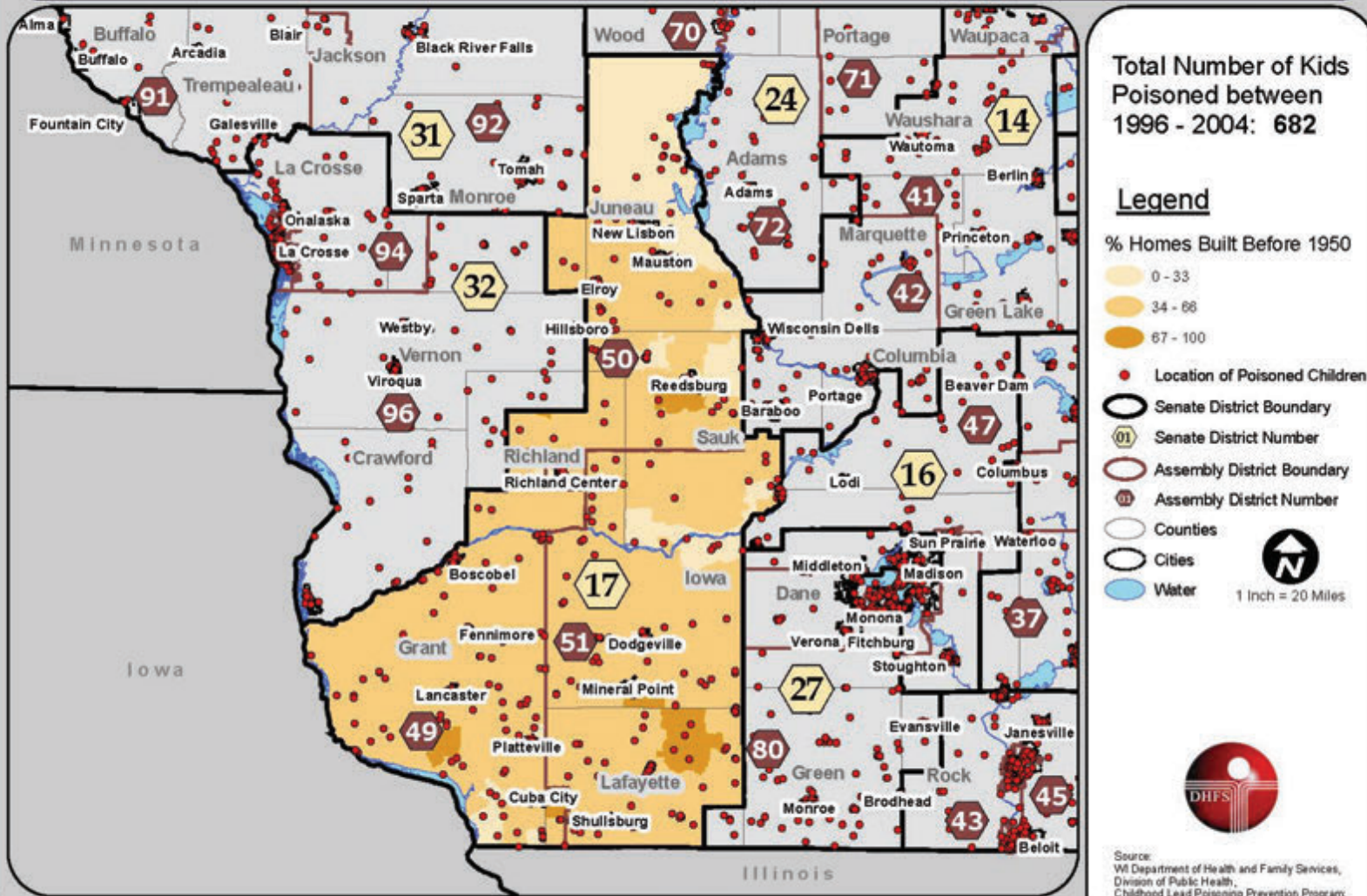
- A review of scientific evidence for adverse effects of lead exposure on children and other information ([www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead](http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead)).
- U.S. Housing and Urban Development, of particular interest the "Lead Paint Safety: A Field Guide for Painting, Home Maintenance and Renovation Work." ([www.hud.gov/offices/lead/training/LBPguide.pdf](http://www.hud.gov/offices/lead/training/LBPguide.pdf)).
- The U. S. Environmental Protection Agency, of particular interest they provide information in Spanish. (<http://www.epa.gov/lead/pubs/leadinfoesp.htm>)

For more information on education materials for preventing lead poisoning, providers may contact the Wisconsin Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program at (608) 266-5817.

Maps of Wisconsin Cities with Population of 25,000 or more are available from the Wisconsin Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program. Other maps are available on Lead-Safe Wisconsin, <http://dhfs.wi.gov/lead/Maps/index.HTM>.



# Lead Poisoning in Wisconsin's 17th Senate District



Locations of children with lead poisoning (red dots), 1996 - 2004 test results. The red dots indicate children whose blood lead levels are greater than or equal to 10 micrograms per deciliter.

## Lead Poisoning in the 17th Senate District

Lead poisoning causes serious and permanent health problems in pre-school aged children. Health effects include reduction in intelligence and attention span, reading and learning disabilities, behavior problems, impaired hearing, kidney damage, and slowed growth. Children exposed to lead are at associated risk of school failure, delinquency and criminal behavior later in life.

- Wisconsin has approximately two million occupied dwellings, of which approximately 660,000 contain lead hazards.
- From 1996 to 2004 there were **682 children reported with lead poisoning in your district**. Official reported numbers of lead poisoned children are based on laboratory reports for children who receive blood lead tests.
- Most Wisconsin pre-school aged children are not tested for lead levels in their blood, **the exact number of poisoned children in your district is unknown**. Therefore, the reported tests shown on the map of your district understate the true impact of lead poisoning in your district.
- Children become poisoned from lead when peeling and chipping paint surfaces in old homes create lead particles contaminating floors, porches, soil and windows.
- The only way to reduce and eventually eliminate lead hazards is to renovate contaminated homes. In most cases this involves stabilizing paint, replacing windows and installing siding.
- Older homes, pre-1978, are more likely to contain lead paint. Homes built prior to 1950 are of the highest risk for poisoning children. There are **27,950 homes built prior to 1950 in your district**.
- DHFS estimates that preventing lead poisoning will save Wisconsin \$14 million per year in costs for education, medical care and lost productivity.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> See Appendix 1 at the hyperlink document: [http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/lead/EP/WI\\_CLP\\_Elim\\_Plan\\_073004.pdf](http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/lead/EP/WI_CLP_Elim_Plan_073004.pdf) or the original work at Appendix B in [http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/lead/doc/Report\\_AllApps.pdf](http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/lead/doc/Report_AllApps.pdf)



State of Wisconsin  
**Department of Health and Family Services**

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Jim Doyle, Governor  
Kevin R. Hayden, Secretary

## **Lead Paint Verdict Is No Help to Kids**

By Sheri Johnson, Ph.D.

The Milwaukee verdict on lead paint is in. Wisconsin's children lost.

The jury in the City of Milwaukee's lawsuit against NL Industries, Inc., a leading manufacturer of lead paint, established that lead paint in homes was a public nuisance. However, the jury also decided that the company was not negligent.

There had been great hope that the paint industry would be held accountable for the enormous damage lead paint has done to multiple generations of children.

Now, for the moment, those hopes are dashed. But when it comes to the total cost of lead paint and lead poisoning in Wisconsin, even the \$52.6 million sought by Milwaukee seems like just the first drop in the paint bucket.

Lead poisoning is a huge problem. More than 40,000 Wisconsin children under age 6 have been found to be poisoned by lead since 1996.

Lead poisoning creates very serious medical and behavioral problems. It interferes with a child's normal brain development, resulting in lower IQ and behavior problems like aggression and hyperactivity. It is the greatest predictor of school disciplinary problems, delinquency and adult criminal behavior. It can destroy families. It can also be fatal.

The primary cause of lead poisoning in young children and infants is lead dust from chipping and peeling paint in homes built before 1950. The problem is acute in Milwaukee, where some 31 percent of all residences are at high risk for lead poisoning. However, we've had cases of childhood lead poisoning in every county in the state.

Windows with lead-based paint are a common source of childhood lead poisoning in Wisconsin. The state estimates the cost of replacing every lead-tainted residential window in the state to be \$3.4 billion. That's serious money—but it's only the cost to replace windows.

Until we address this problem, Wisconsin taxpayers, health insurers and families bear the costs for medical treatment, special education, juvenile justice and future loss of earnings due to lead poisoning.

State and local public health departments are working hard on this issue. Last year, our Department's Division of Public Health revised its plan to eliminate childhood lead poisoning by 2010. The outcome of this lawsuit means we must redouble our efforts, including working with landlords to remove the lead from their properties.

The sad fact is that, for many children, screening can simply identify the problem, not prevent it. The infusion of funding from the lawsuit would have helped more kids look forward to leading productive and fruitful lives, free of the scourge of lead poisoning. The challenge for Wisconsin now is to identify other resources to fix lead problems.

That doesn't mean the paint industry is off the hook. Getting the paint industry to pay its fair share of the costs of lead poisoning is a struggle that will not end. It will not end because we owe it to our kids to do our very best to get them the protection they deserve.

To find out more about what you can do and get more information, contact our Lead-Safe Wisconsin website, [dhfs.wi.gov/lead](https://dhfs.wi.gov/lead) or call your local health department.

- END -

*The Department of Health and Family Services protects and promotes the health and safety of the people of Wisconsin. Dr. Sheri Johnson is Wisconsin's State Health Officer.*