

Protecting Wisconsin's Children from Lead Poisoning

Strategic approaches

Lead poisoning is a statewide problem.

Every year, **thousands of Wisconsin children are poisoned** because of exposures to lead in paint, dust, soil, old plumbing, and more.

Lead poisoning causes lifelong harm. It can permanently affect a child's brain, leading to reduced IQ, learning difficulties, behavioral problems, and chronic health issues.

By the numbers

- **Over 15,000** Wisconsin children under age 6 were diagnosed with lead poisoning over the past 5 years.
- Lead poisoning has been identified in all **72 of Wisconsin's counties**.
- An estimated **350,000 Wisconsin homes** contain lead-based paint hazards.

Lead poisoning is preventable

We know how to stop lead poisoning. In Wisconsin, most children are poisoned in the buildings where they live, learn, and play.

To stop lead poisoning, we must:

- **Respond quickly when a child is poisoned.**
- **Remove lead from a child's environment.**

Opportunities for system changes

Wisconsin local health departments are being asked to do more quick less, strained by outdated laws and lack of state investment.

CDC recommends that all children with lead poisoning (defined as a blood lead level of 3.5 ug/dL or higher) receive a public health response.

Wisconsin's required response level is 4 times higher. This leaves thousands of children unsupported.

Strategic approaches

1. Make homes lead safe

Wisconsin families need support for removing dangerous lead paint from their homes **before** a child is poisoned.

Establish programs to help low- to moderate-income homeowners of older homes replace windows, doors, and other high-risk building components painted with lead paint.

2. Respond to every poisoned child

Local health departments desperately need resources to support families to prevent future exposures and support the health of their poisoned child.

State funding was established over 30 years ago, in 1993, and has not increased since.

Increase resources so local health departments can provide lead investigations, case management, and education to families of poisoned children.

3. Catch and stop lead poisoning early

Align requirements for a health response at a blood lead level of 3.5 ug/dL. It is dangerous to wait until a child's blood lead level becomes more severe.

A University of Wisconsin-Madison cost-benefit analysis found that this would result in an estimated **\$2.5 billion in net benefits**.

4. Support local interventions

Support local authority to address unsafe rental housing before children are poisoned.

Support local government's ability to establish sustainable programs based on local housing and public health needs.

