



Preventing Childhood Lead Poisoning

Background

In 2021, 2,900 Ohio children tested positive for elevated levels of lead in their blood. The actual number is likely higher because only 50 to 60 percent of high-risk children are tested. Lead poisoning comes with a lifetime of health and societal consequences. Children can experience developmental delays, bone and muscle loss, and cognitive impairment. Lead-poisoned children are less likely to be ready for kindergarten, more likely to interact with the juvenile and adult criminal justice system, and more likely to be homeless as adults. ***There is no safe level of lead in the blood.***

The Need

Currently, two-thirds of Ohio's housing stock was built before lead paint was outlawed, meaning that it is at risk of containing lead hazards. An estimated 427,000 kids are living in or spending a significant amount of time in these homes. At our current rate of investment in lead abatement, it will take over a century before Ohio's lead hazards are fully addressed.

Despite the scope of the issue, many people do not recognize that lead poisoning is still a problem. Many parents do not know that most lead poisoning occurs from lead paint dust or lead paint chips from inside their homes. While there are rules in place around lead safety and home repair work, they are not always enforced. Often contractors performing home repair or renovation are not adequately trained or are not even aware of lead safety rules.

As with many public health issues, lead poisoning disproportionately affects minority communities. However, the issue touches all corners of our state. Rural areas of Ohio tend to have older housing stock, making them much more likely to contain lead hazards. In fact, the three counties with the highest concentration of pre-1980 housing are rural counties.

Ohio's Progress in Addressing Lead Poisoning

In 2021, Ohio's leaders invested \$13.5 million in grant funding for the first-of-its-kind Lead Safe Housing Fund for communities to advance primary prevention strategies. Additionally, funds were included in the state budget for the Ohio Lead Abatement Tax Credit and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP).

What Should Ohio Do?

Lead poisoning is costly to our state. It is estimated ***Ohio could save up to \$2.8 billion a year by preventing lead poisoning.*** Ohio should:

- Make a significant investment into the Lead Poisoning Prevention Fund to create a foundation for a stable and dedicated resource for lead safe housing.
- Expand the SCHIP Lead Program for High-Risk Children to bolster prevention efforts.
- Give the Ohio Department of Health the ability to enforce the Renovation, Repair, and Painting (RRP) rule.
- Work with the Department of Development on a lead workforce initiative to increase and support the number of people engaged in lead poisoning prevention work.
- Support the bi-partisan proposal to use American Rescue Plan funding for residential lead abatement and lead hazard control.