



Lead-Safe Homes, Lead-Free Kids Toolkit

Background

HUD is tasked with providing “quality, affordable homes.” When it pertains to HUD-assisted housing, that means it must be lead-safe housing. The effects of lead poisoning are damaging and, according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), even low levels of lead in young children’s blood have been shown to have long-term effects on health and development. Lead poisoning has been linked to behavioral challenges, learning disabilities, and a decreased ability to concentrate, all of which present serious challenges to future academic and professional success. Lead poisoning has also been tied to an increased incidence of violence in early adulthood and can cause health risks including damage to the brain and other vital organs, like the kidneys, nerves and blood.

Exposure to lead – through paint-based sources, including deteriorated paint, dust, and soil– presents a risk to HUD-assisted residents. HUD has a long history of working to ensure lead-safe housing for HUD residents. In fact, HUD-assisted housing is significantly safer and healthier than lower-income housing receiving no government assistance. Through its lead hazard control grant program, HUD has also identified and controlled lead-based paint hazards in more than 190,000 private homes, with additional funding provided in June 2016 to 15 communities to make more than 3,100 more homes lead-safe. But until lead-based paint no longer poses a public health hazard, HUD will continue this work and fight for the resources needed to protect children from the harmful and lasting effects of lead.

Along with the steps below, full funding of HUD’s lead hazard control program and the CDC childhood lead poisoning prevention program are critical tools for preventing debilitating and costly lead poisoning. HUD strongly supports congressional actions to fund these proven programs.

Through immediate changes to HUD programs, stronger enforcement, and working with Congress on new tools and approaches, HUD is committed to ensuring that all HUD housing is lead-safe for families and children.

Priorities for Lead-Safe Housing, Lead-Free Kids Toolkit

In order to meet this overarching goal, HUD is developing a comprehensive plan that consists of four main objectives.

1. Improve the process to identify and control lead hazards

- a. Issue HUD’s Proposed Revision to the Lead Safe Housing Rule to correspond with the CDC standard and provide a more rigorous process for assessing lead hazards (Note: Under review at OMB)
- b. Support legislative change to strengthen lead safety for housing voucher units, eliminating reliance on visual-only inspections
- c. Develop a consistent standard for and response to water quality issues in HUD-assisted housing



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT
WASHINGTON, DC 20410-0500

- d. Clarify guidance to HUD housing providers and grantees on Lead Safe Housing Rule with the following result:
 - i. encourage PHAs to immediately act on an elevated blood lead level in children, as defined by the CDC standard, including a lead hazard inspection and possible relocation for voucher residents
- e. Increase data-sharing among federal and local partners to allow mapping of HUD-assisted housing where there is a risk of lead hazards and test those units

2. Collaborate across agencies and with private entities to better serve HUD residents

- a. Partner with Administration colleagues to encourage an interagency focus on addressing lead hazard prevention for paint and other sources, including CDC and the Environmental Protection Agency. CDC has worked to prevent childhood lead poisoning for nearly 30 years through its partnerships and grants to state and local health departments.
- b. Convene philanthropic organizations to partner on expanded training of testers and contractors, increasing the number of children tested for lead, and providing resources for children testing with elevated blood lead levels
- c. Provide education and targeted outreach to increase awareness of lead by HUD families, housing providers, local governments, and other key stakeholders, and work with health departments to make available blood lead level testing to all children under age six in HUD-assisted homes
- d. Continue efforts to increase the number of children in HUD-assisted units enrolled in Medicaid
- e. Develop a toolkit for states and localities that outlines best practices for leveraging existing HUD resources and funds to engage in lead prevention and response efforts

3. Provide increased resources for families to identify and respond to lead poisoning

- a. Connect HUD residents with early education, nutrition programs, counseling, tutoring, and related programs to combat the impacts of lead exposure
- b. Create a mechanism for housing advocates assisting HUD residents to report potential violations of HUD's lead safety regulations
- c. Create an online clearinghouse of information for HUD residents about lead hazards and safety and their rights

4. Develop a research agenda to identify best practices and determine where best to target federal resources

- a. Conduct an assessment of the effectiveness of the Lead Safe Housing Rule that will lead to policy recommendations for program improvements
- b. Study effectiveness of CDBG and HOME grantees' use of formula grants addressing lead issues
- c. Release PD&R study on prevalence of children under six with elevated blood lead levels in HUD-assisted housing