



CCWRO Welfare News - 2017-12



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Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations, Inc. (CCWRO)
1111 Howe Ave., Suite 150 • Sacramento, CA 95825-8551
Telephone (916) 736-0616 • Cell (916) 712-0071 • Fax (916) 736-2645

Lead Poisoning & California's Children: This is Not a War That Has Been Won

For most of 2017 CCWRO staff and volunteers reviewed information about blood lead poisoning and children, particularly, poor children who are Medi-Cal recipients or Medi-Cal eligible. The resulting information is alarming. Most children, eligible for free blood lead screening at ages 12 months and 24 months, are not receiving these screenings. According to the most recently provided data from the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS), only about 25% of Medi-Cal recipient children are being tested.¹

What does this mean? It means possibly as many as 500,000 children who are at known risks for lead exposure are not receiving federally mandated blood lead screenings.

Facts For Your Consideration:

Children who are exposed to lead lose \$3,000 to almost \$8,000 in lifetime productivity for each 1 microgram per deciliter ($\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$) increase in blood lead level. Blood lead levels over 1 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ are associated with measurable reductions in IQ.

Between 2007–2008 and 2009–2010, interventions that control or eliminate lead hazards before children are exposed (primary prevention) helped reduce the number of children exposed to lead (blood lead levels $\geq 1 \mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$) by nearly 3 million, saving \$26–57 billion in lifetime productivity earnings alone. These estimates do not account for behavioral and other adverse effects on lifetime productivity linked to lead.

Source: CDC; NCEH State Fact Sheets: California, posted April 29, 2014

https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/information/state_factsheets/california.htm - Accessed 12/27/2017

Medical studies have documented that a woman can transfer lead stored in her bones to her fetus during pregnancy, thus making maternal lead transfer a risk to the fetus during pregnancy and while the mother is nursing. See https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/tools/are_you_pregnant.pdf
Source: CDC Flyer “Are You Pregnant?” Accessed 12/26/2017.

A 2008 report based on a blood lead studies of predominantly

¹ CDHS revised data on blood lead testing for FFY 2012 - 2015.

African American mothers and children found a direct correlation between high blood lead levels during infancy and early childhood as a high predictor for involvement with the criminal justice system in late adolescence and young adulthood. See “Cincinnati Lead Study”, National Institutes of Environmental Health (2007)

<https://www.niehs.nih.gov/research/supported/cohort/resources/cohort755390.cfm>.

Source: “Cincinnati Lead Study”, National Institutes of Environmental Health (2007) - Accessed 12/26/2017.

Childhood Lead Poisoning By the Numbers

The United States Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has joined international health agencies in stating that there is no safe level of lead exposure. Since 2016, the CDC recommends that children with blood lead levels of 4.5 micrograms of lead per 1 deciliter (approximately 4 ounces) of blood receive public health treatment including lead exposure assessments of their homes and other environments. It also recommends that these children and their families also be provided with appropriate nutritional and medical support to counteract the impacts of lead poisoning.

Lead poisoning in children is like hypertension (high blood pressure) in adults. It is a condition that can only be identified by appropriate testing as well as on-going surveillance. It is best treated with on-going monitoring, changes in conduct and diet.

Parents can only address blood lead poisoning if they know one thing: what is my child's current blood lead level?

CDHS information indicates that only 25% of one and two year olds eligible for some type of health care assistance have been tested between 2012 and 2015. Per federal law, 100% of these children should be tested annually during their 12 and 24 month medical check-ups. With most children not receiving these recommended medical screenings, as many as 500,000 young children are at risk of the life-threatening consequences of lead poisoning. The effects of high blood levels can affect a child's ability to learn; can negatively impact a child's conduct and behaviors; and can kill if high levels of exposure are not identified and treated as quickly as possible.

Lead Poisoning: Frequently Asked Questions

What is lead? Lead is a naturally occurring element. It is often used in metal-working with other elements, such as iron. It is used to make pipes and other products such as solders, paint, dishes, pottery, toys (including jewelry), candy. Lead may be included in imported home remedies, medicines and cosmetics and make-up. Lead can also be found in many workplaces mainly auto repair, construction, metal manufacturing, recycling and plumbing. See https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/tools/leadglossary_508.pdf - Accessed 12/2017

What is lead poisoning? A sickness caused by swallowing or breathing lead. Lead poisons children when it gets into their bodies. Lead poisoning can hurt the brain and nervous system and slow down growth and development. See https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/tools/leadglossary_508.pdf - Accessed 12/2017

What are the symptoms of lead poisoning in a child? Most children who have lead poisoning do not look or act sick. Symptoms, if present, may be confused with common childhood complaints, such as stomach pain, crankiness, headaches, or loss of appetite. See https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDCPHP/DEOD/CLPPB/Pages/frequently_asked_questions.aspx#howdoiknow - Accessed 12/2017.

What are the effects of lead poisoning in children? Severely lead poisoned children and adults from toxic lead exposure. Lead can affect all parts of a child's body. In young children, toxic lead exposure has been found to cause nerve damage, hearing problems and behavior problems. Children with high blood lead levels have problems learning and controlling their behavior. Source: EPA website "Learn About Lead" Updated 5/26/2017 at <https://www.epa.gov/lead/learn-about-lead#effects> - Accessed 12/2017.

Where can I get blood lead testing for my child or children in my community? Children age 1 and 2 years old enrolled in publicly funded health care, i.e. Medi-Cal, CHDP and WIC, are at high risk of lead poisoning and should be tested. Cost for the test is covered by the public health programs listed above and most private health insurance plans. Children enrolled in publicly-funded health care programs who are between 2 and 6 years old and have not been tested are eligible for free services. Young children under 6 who spend time in homes, childcare centers, or buildings built before 1978 should also be tested. Any infant or child who is thought to be at risk or comes in contact with items that may contain lead should be tested.

Source: California Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Branch website <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDCPHP/DEOD/CLPPB/Pages/clpppsrvs.aspx> - Accessed 12/26/2017. The only way to know if your child has lead poisoning is for the child to get a blood test for lead. Talk to your child's health care provider to see if your child is at risk for lead poisoning.

Which Children are at the Highest Risk for Lead Poisoning

According to the California Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Branch (within the California Department of Public Health) those at most risk are

Children under six years old and fetuses (unborn babies at all stages of development.

The bodies of young children and infants are growing and developing rapidly, most especially their bones and their nervous systems. The high risk of lead exposure for very young children are based on these facts:

- They frequently crawl on floors or furniture contaminated with lead dust and put their hands or other objects in their mouths.
- More of the lead that gets into their mouth is taken up into their bodies.
- Much of the lead is stored in their bones.
- Lead can be measured in their blood and remains in their bodies for a long time.

Other children at risk include

- Young children under six years of age who spend time in homes, childcare centers, or buildings built before 1978 that have chipping or peeling paint. (The old paint may still have lead in it.)
- Young children who play in bare soil, especially soil that is close to an older house or structure, i.e. a garage, shed or barn that may have been painted with lead paint..
- Children who have recently come from or who spend time in other countries, i.e. recent immigrants and children adopted from other countries
- Infants born to mothers with an elevated level of lead in their blood would be at risk for lead poisoning. Lead crosses the placenta and has harmful effects on the fetus. Pregnant women exposed to lead should ask their doctor about a blood test.

Source: https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDCPHP/DEOD/CLPPB/Pages/frequently_asked_questions.aspx - Access 12/2017

Where Can I Get my Child's Blood Level Tested?

Parents of children who use Medi-Cal should discuss lead poisoning and risks factors specific to their child with the child's doctors. The federal Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment program, known as "EPDST", provides a range of comprehensive and preventive health care services for children under age 21 who are enrolled in the Medi-Cal (Medi-Caid) program. This includes children who are on SSI (Social Security Supplemental Security Income), children in Foster Care or Kin-Gap families. In California EPDST services are provided through the CHDP, Child Health and Disabilities Prevention program.

Source: [Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment | Medicaid.gov](http://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/benefits/epsdt/index.html)
<https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/benefits/epsdt/index.html>; and

Guideline #6, Blood Lead Test and Anticipatory Guidance, California Department of Health Care Services, Integrated Systems of Care Division, Child Health and Disability Prevention Program, Health Assessment Guidelines SEPTEMBER 2017, <http://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/chdp/Documents/HAG/Chapter6.pdf> - Accessed 12/2017

EPDST eligible children are required to receive blood lead screenings at ages 12 months and 24 months. If a child has not been tested, CHDP allows for a child to receive free testing up age 6. See also Guideline #6 referenced above.

Every county public health agency has a staff person who is designated as a contact resource by the California Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Branch. Paste this link to your browser to find the contact for your county:

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDPHP/DE-ODC/CLPPB/Pages/CLPPPIndex.aspx>

What Should I Know About the Results of My Child's Blood Lead Test?

Parents should discuss the results of their child's blood lead test with a qualified medical professional. While there is no known safe level of lead exposure for children, treatment can range from monitoring and reducing environmental risks to aggressive medical interventions that have the goal of reducing blood lead levels. The relevant levels are:

○ 4.5 micrograms per deciliter

Management of lead exposure is key. Identify possible sources of lead exposure; encourage hand washing; avoid contact with items that may contain lead such as bullets, certain types of make-up, toys and ceramic dishes. Consult with a nutritionist to identify foods, particularly fresh fruits and vegetables that can increase the child's intake of iron and calcium and other mineral nutrients from healthy, natural sources.

○ 5.0 - 9.9 micrograms per deciliter

Identification and management of lead exposure sources is critical. Other children, pregnant and nursing women in the home (or building if the child is living in a multi-family property) should be tested. Retesting (rather than screening tests) should be scheduled to determine if the blood lead level is stable or declining rather than increasing. Consultation with a nutritionist and industrial hygienist are strongly recommended.

○ 10 - 14 micrograms per deciliter (or higher)

Same as the strategies outlined above. At blood lead levels greater than 10 micrograms, the child should be referred for public health management through the local county public health agency or the state CCLPB services. Prompt identification of lead exposure sources must be made to address environmental risks to the child and others who may be at risk.

Source: Guideline #6, Blood Lead Test and Anticipatory Guidance, California Department of Health Care Services, Integrated Systems of Care Division, Child Health and Disability Prevention Program, Health Assessment Guidelines SEPTEMBER 2017, <http://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/chdp/Documents/HAG/Chapter6.pdf> - Accessed 12/2017

Re-Engaging in the War on Lead Poisoning - The 2018 To Do List

- Encourage anyone that you know with a young child (6 or younger) to discuss lead poisoning risks with their doctor and have the child or children tested for lead exposure.

- Insist that groups and organizations and locations where parents of young children gather have information about lead poisoning risks and testing services have brochures available and posters on the walls.

- Have your home or any location where your young child spends time (grandma's house, the babysitter's place, day care, even the church nursery) assessed for lead exposure by a qualified professional.

See the California Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Branch Website at https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDPHP/DEODC/CLPPB/Pages/home_test.aspx

At CCWRO, our position on blood lead testing is that any Medi-Cal recipient or eligible child who has not been tested is at risk. The state's poor testing performance needs to be improved, immediately. Untested children (those 3 to 6 year olds who did not receive their tests as 1 and 2 year olds) must be screened as soon as possible and hopefully before they start school.

In doing this research, we found stories that illustrated the breadth of the risk of lead exposure:

- A pediatrician who learned that her home was exposing her children. Source: **Special Report: Thousands of U.S. areas afflicted with lead poisoning beyond Flint's**, [/www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-lead-testing-specialreport/special-report-thousands-of-u-s-areas-afflicted-with-lead-poisoning-beyond-flints-idUSKBN1481BT](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-lead-testing-specialreport/special-report-thousands-of-u-s-areas-afflicted-with-lead-poisoning-beyond-flints-idUSKBN1481BT), published 12/19/2016, accessed on line 12/28/2017.

- Widespread blood lead poisoning among children in Brooklyn, New York's Hassidim. Source: Harretz <https://www.haaretz.com/us-news/1.822782>, published 11/14/2017, accessed 12/27/2017.

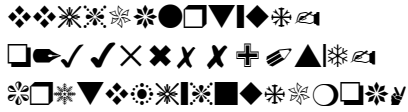
The challenge of reducing blood lead exposure for California's children has identified hotspots, such as Fresno, California. Many other children in many other communities both urban and rural and even suburban towns, are also at risk. **What to do?**

- Fully utilizing existing statutes and policies could increase California's testing rates from under 30% to something more robust, or at least 50% of eligibles.

- Encourage pregnant women and nursing women that you know to have their lead tested for blood. You may want to insist if she is not only low-income but living in an older home or apartment or if she uses a drinking water source with known risks for heavy metals.

- New California laws are directing school districts and local water agencies to test drinking fountains and water sources in schools for lead exposure. Make sure your local school is participating in these testing activities.

- Write, call and tell your legislators (state and Federal) as well as local political leaders that you are concerned about lead poisoning as it relates to older housing (built before 1978); public water source; and prompted effective treatment for lead exposed children.



**WELFARE FRAUD DSS
MONITORING REPORTS**

**County IHSS Client
Abuse Report**

DECEMBER 2017 FACTS:

SSI - About 1 million IHSS recipients will be food insecure this holiday season compliments of the State of California which refuses to give SSI recipients food stamps depriving them of a Christmas meal. Shame!

CalWORKs - There are 647,000 children living in families with an average cash income less than 39% of the federal poverty level. Many of the 647,000 children, living in deep poverty, will go hungry this Christmas while California fleeces over \$2.3 billion of CalWORKs dollars, resulting in California State government child abuse of CalWORKs kids.

Why? Because although there was \$7.3 billion available for the CalWORKs program during 2017-2018, the Governor proposed, and the Democratic Legislature only approved \$5.1 for California's CalWORKs kids and families living in deep poverty. What happened to the rest - \$2.3 billion? It was used to partially fund California's the rainy day fund.

