

Louisiana Impact of Cuts to CDC's Healthy Homes and Lead Poisoning Prevention Program

Each year, approximately 800 children and 135 adults are newly diagnosed with lead poisoning. The Louisiana Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program (LACLPPP) officials follow up on these cases, inspect the homes, and order units with lead hazards to be repaired. Nearly 800 cases are being followed or managed annually with 25 new abatement orders issued. Scientific research indicates the need to start helping even more children with blood lead levels below the current action level.

In 2012, Louisiana's lead program is receiving \$594,000 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Healthy Homes and Lead Poisoning Prevention Program (FY2011 funding). That funding is scheduled to end in August 31, 2012, at which time the State will determine what funding exists to continue the program and staff. LACLPPP received \$407,974 in FY10, which paid for 4.5 full-time staff positions for grantees, plus 4.5 sub-grantee jobs. LACLPPP was also able to fund two subcontracts totaling \$250,615.

The State has maintained a surveillance system since 2002 to capture and aggregate the results of blood tests for lead. By March 2011, the surveillance system had accumulated almost 500,000 blood test records; the data provides the CLPPP with information necessary to identify high-risk areas for lead poisoning and track patterns over time and to guide program activities and evaluation. The data is also used in program planning and other federal grant applications including for HUD, CDC, and EPA. CDC funding enables Louisiana's program to respond to emerging lead threats. For example, in some cases, multiple children in the same family may have elevated blood lead levels. CDC-funded environmental health professional conducts an environmental inspection to identify a lead hazard in the home or child care facility. In addition, the program also creates opportunities for outreach in the forms of stressing the importance of lead testing, providing education to families on how to prevent exposures to hazards in the home, and contractor training on proper renovation.

The CDC-funded LACLPPP helps ensure medical provider compliance with Medicaid and other requirements for lead screening services for eligible children. Testing is the only way to discover if a child has been poisoned. Louisiana Administrative Code 48: V. 7005, 7007, 7009 requires that all children ages six to 72 months residing or spending more than 10 hours in any Louisiana parish must be screened for lead. The code also mandates case reporting by health care providers. The resulting environmental investigations and case management are very expensive. Medicaid reimbursement doesn't cover the expense. LACLPPP has reported that the cost for its environmental investigations ranges anywhere from \$557 to \$773 per incident; Medicaid reimbursement is \$22.61.

If funding is not restored for the program at CDC in FY2013, Louisiana will suffer from a reduction in vital services. Without the surveillance data provided through the CDC program, there will be no way to treat the existing threat or track a possible resurgence in blood lead levels. Without funding, LACLPPP will no longer be able to contract with the LSU Agricultural Center (LSU Ag) and the City of New Orleans Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program. Through the contract with LSU Ag, LACLPPP is able to provide technical assistance (TA) to private and public health care providers, educators, and other community leaders/organizations on childhood lead poisoning and healthy homes. The metropolitan New Orleans area has the highest childhood lead poisoning rate in the state. Through the CDC grant, LACLPPP was able to fund the city to provide for 2 full time positions and to provide education, outreach and technical assistance to providers and other community member directly in the city. Without the funding, these activities would cease. The impact of the elimination of CDC's Healthy Homes and Lead Poisoning Prevention Program is significant, and Louisiana's children stand to lose significantly. Cuts in funding will severely curtail the successful program the State has worked for over 10 years to build. Now is not the time to dismantle CDC's Healthy Homes and Lead Poisoning Prevention Program.