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SP605-R-Introduction_Tennessee Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program

The University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service

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Introduction



Tennessee Department
of Health

Agricultural Extension Service
The University of Tennessee



SP 605-R

How to Use This Kit . . .

This Community Action Kit is divided into the following sections:

- Parents and Family
- Health Department Personnel
- Property Owners/Real Estate Professionals
- Child Care Centers
- Children
- Hobbies
- Builders/Remodelers/Painters
- Latino/Cultural Issues

Each section contains information addressing both individuals and communities that are being targeted by the Tennessee Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program (TNCLPPP). Many of the materials are in factsheet format; others are brochures and publications provided by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Additional copies of the factsheets may be obtained from the University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service. Brochures may be ordered from both HUD and the EPA.

You are encouraged to use these materials as a starting point for work in your community. Look for ways to distribute this information to your intended audiences. For example, factsheets may be reproduced and placed in a physician's office. Brochures may be given to community members attending a meeting concerning housing. "Think outside of the box" for creative ideas to get your community involved in preventing childhood lead poisoning.

Included in the packet is a copy of the "Community Outreach Kit for Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention." This brochure was developed by the U.S. Department of

Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The brochure takes you step-by-step through conducting a successful campaign. Included are sample letters, public service announcements (PSAs), media advocacy tips and other useful ideas.

Use this kit to your advantage in your community. Preventing childhood lead poisoning is a serious topic. Your dedication to this issue will advance awareness in your community and in the state.

The Tennessee Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program . . .

The Tennessee Department of Health received a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to develop a statewide program targeting children at risk for lead poisoning. TDH entered into a partnership with The University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service (UTAES) to develop and distribute materials statewide. The materials are targeted at parents, health care providers, health departments, real estate agents, Extension county faculty and anyone else in a position to impact the lives of children.

The program's goals are:

- Monitor all blood lead levels (BLLs) of children younger than 6 years old
- Increase screening of children at high risk of lead exposure
- Assure proper follow-up for children with elevated blood lead levels
- Increase public awareness of childhood lead poisoning and prevention

The TN CLPPP aims to increase the number of childhood lead screenings. Children who are recipients of Medicaid

(TennCare) are specific targets in that they constitute a significant proportion of children with elevated blood lead levels. The need for awareness and screening among this population cannot be overstated.

However, all children are considered at risk and should be screened at the ages of 12 and 24 months. The TN CLPPP is dedicated to reaching families and communities for the prevention of this environmental risk to young children.

About Lead Poisoning and Testing

Lead poisoning is considered to be the most serious environmental threat to children's health. Children at most risk are those under the age of 6 years. These children are more at risk of lead poisoning because their growing bodies that have not yet matured. Children's brains and nervous systems are easily damaged by lead. Also children have more hand-to-mouth activity that can result in ingesting lead from the environment. Lead poisoning, if left undetected, can cause the following health problems in children:

- slowed growth
- learning problems
- impaired hearing
- behavior problems (such as hyperactivity)
- nerve and/or brain damage
- coma and even death

You cannot tell if a child has lead poisoning by looking at him or her. Many children do not display any symptoms, even with elevated blood lead levels. Some symptoms may be mistaken for the flu or other illnesses. These symptoms include:

- stomach ache and cramps
- constipation
- irritability
- headache
- fatigue
- sleep disorders
- frequent vomiting
- poor appetite

There are many sources of lead poisoning. Some of these include:

- Air that contains lead-based paint dust
- Eating chips of lead-based paint (especially in houses built before 1978)
- Soil that has been contaminated by lead dust or exhaust from leaded gasoline
- Hobbies such as fishing, stained glass and pottery
- Home remedies for stomach ailments
- Drinking water from old lead pipes
- Foods stored in or eaten out of lead crystal or pottery glazed with lead-based paint

Blood lead screening is essential to determine if a child has lead poisoning. The current health standard requires that a finger stick blood test for lead screening be administered for children at ages 12 months and 24 months. Testing should be completed if a child aged 36-72 months has not previously received a blood test for lead. Primary care physicians should complete a lead risk assessment questionnaire at each well-child checkup on all children 6 months to 72 months of age. This questionnaire is designed to help the health care professional determine a child's risk for lead exposure or if there are new conditions in the child's home environment that would put the child at a higher risk for lead exposure.

There are no "safe levels" of lead. The Tennessee Department of Health and the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) are prepared to work with families who have unhealthy living environments.

Contact Information:

Your local county Health Department
Tennessee Department of Health - (615) 741-0355

Dr. Joy Cook

Pinkie Britton

Your local county Extension office

UT Extension Service (865) 974-8197

Dr. Martha Keel

Cortney Niemann

Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation

Adrian White Lead line 1-888-771 (LEAD) (5323)

This community action kit is developed and compiled by The University of Tennessee Extension Service.

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