

# TOXIC LEAD

## PA LAWMAKERS MUST ACT TO PROTECT CHILDREN IN LUZERNE COUNTY

### DID YOU KNOW?

- Lead poisoning can cause permanent brain damage to children – especially babies and kids six and under. Lead can cause learning, behavior, hearing and speech problems, sometimes requiring special education services, and is a risk factor for criminal behavior.<sup>i,ii</sup>
- For every dollar spent on removing lead paint-based hazards in children's homes and apartments, \$17–\$221 would be returned in health benefits, increased IQ, higher lifetime earnings, tax revenue, reduced spending on special education and reduced criminal activity.<sup>iii</sup>

### WHAT DOES THE LEAD POISONING CRISIS LOOK LIKE IN LUZERNE COUNTY?

- Luzerne County has the **5<sup>TH</sup> HIGHEST NUMBER OF CHILDREN POISONED** of all PA counties.<sup>iv</sup>
- 400 CHILDREN ARE POISONED EVERY YEAR<sup>v</sup>** - enough to fill more than 20 pre-school classrooms.
- With **ONLY 20% OF CHILDREN SCREENED** for lead<sup>vi</sup>, more are likely to be poisoned.
- LEAD-BASED PAINT HAZARDS IN CHILDREN'S HOMES ARE THE MAIN SOURCE OF LEAD POISONING.** Lead-based paint was not banned for residential use until 1978, and 67% of residential properties in Luzerne County were built before 1980.<sup>vii</sup>
- Black and Hispanic children are disproportionately poisoned because they are more likely to live in older properties with deteriorated lead-based paint. In Luzerne County, **3 TIMES MORE BLACK CHILDREN AND 1.5 TIMES MORE HISPANIC CHILDREN ARE POISONED THAN WHITE CHILDREN.**<sup>viii</sup>

## CHILDHOOD LEAD POISONING IS 100% PREVENTABLE

primarily by removing lead paint-based hazards in their homes. Luzerne County children need protection from toxic lead.

## URGE YOUR STATE LEGISLATORS AND LOCAL OFFICIALS TO:

**CALL  
TO  
ACTION**

- FUND** removal of lead paint from children's homes.
- GUARANTEE** every PA child is appropriately tested twice before the age of two.
- REQUIRE** municipalities to implement "Lead-Safe" or "Lead-Free" certification for rental properties built before 1978.

## Kevin is a rambunctious 5-year-old

starting kindergarten, Sarah is his 2-year-old sister, and John is the youngest of the bunch at just 1-year-old. Their mom Denise noticed that Sarah was not progressing in the same way that Kevin did when he was her age. She was slower to speak and seemed unable to pay attention when they read books together. Denise took Sarah to the doctor who recognized these symptoms as developmental delays. Because the family was covered by Medicaid, which requires blood lead testing for all children at ages one and two, Sarah and John were tested for lead and Kevin got a follow-up test as well. All three kids had elevated blood lead levels, and Sarah's was especially high at 19 ug/dL, nearly six times higher than the CDC's threshold for poisoning. Her pediatrician contacted her Medicaid health plan to send a lead inspection team to test the family's home, which Denise described as more than 50 years old and in significant disrepair with holes in the roof and peeling paint inside and out. There are no medications to cure Denise's children and reverse any damage done. The number one 'treatment' for Sarah and her siblings is to stop being exposed to lead hazards and remove the toxic lead from their home.

The Lead-Free Promise Project is part of Thriving PA  
<https://thrivingpa.org/>



LeadFreePA.org



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