



THE TIME IS NOW

TO FINALLY END LEAD PAINT POISONING IN PHILADELPHIA COUNTY

DID YOU KNOW?

-  **THERE IS NO KNOWN SAFE LEVEL OF LEAD.**
-  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.^{i, ii}
-  For every dollar spent removing lead-based paint hazards in children's homes and apartments, \$17-\$221 would be returned in health benefits, higher average IQ, higher lifetime earnings, tax revenue, reduced spending on special education and reduced criminal activity.ⁱⁱⁱ
-  **LEAD-BASED PAINT HAZARDS IN CHILDREN'S HOMES ARE THE MAIN SOURCE OF LEAD POISONING IN PA.**^{iv, v} Lead-based paint was not banned for residential use until 1978.^{v, vi}

WHAT DOES THE LEAD POISONING CRISIS LOOK LIKE IN PHILADELPHIA COUNTY?

-  Philadelphia County has the **HIGHEST NUMBER OF CHILDREN POISONED** of all PA counties.^{iv}
-  **OVER 2,500 CHILDREN ARE POISONED EVERY YEAR**^{iv} – enough to fill 127 pre-school classrooms.
-  With **ONLY 30% OF CHILDREN BETWEEN 0-71 MONTHS OLD SCREENED** for lead^{iv}, more are likely to be poisoned.
-  **83% OF RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES IN PHILADELPHIA COUNTY WERE BUILT BEFORE 1980.**^{vii}
-  **BLACK AND HISPANIC CHILDREN ARE DISPROPORTIONATELY POISONED** because they are more likely to live in older properties with lead-based paint.^v For every white child poisoned by lead in Philadelphia, there are 5 black children and 2 Hispanic children with lead poisoning.^{viii}

CHILDHOOD LEAD POISONING IS PREVENTABLE

Primarily by removing lead-based paint hazards in older homes. Philadelphia County children need protection from toxic lead.

GOALS

PAINT A LEAD-FREE FUTURE FOR CHILDREN:

-  **GUARANTEE** every PA child is tested for lead twice by age two.
-  **SUPPORT** municipalities in the implementation of "Lead-Safe" or "Lead-Free" certification for properties built before 1978.
-  **REMOVE** lead-based paint hazards from children's homes.

**testing numbers include confirmed and unconfirmed lead test results.*

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.



LeadFreePA.org



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i Centers for Disease Control, (2020). <https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/prevention/health-effects.htm>

ii Wright JP, Dietrich KN, Ris MD, Hornung RW, Wessel SD, Lanphear BP, et al. (2008) Association of Prenatal and Childhood Blood Lead Concentrations with Criminal Arrests in Early Adulthood. *PLoS Med* 5(5): e101. doi:10.1371/journal.pmed.0050101. <https://journals.plos.org/plosmedicine/article/file?id=10.1371/journal.pmed.0050101&type=printable>

iii Gould, E. (2009). Childhood Lead Poisoning: Conservative Estimates of the Social and Economic Benefits of Lead Hazard Control. *Environ. Health Perspect.* 117(7): 1162-1167.

iv Pennsylvania Department of Public Health, (2026). 2023 Childhood Lead Surveillance Annual Report.

<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/Documents/Environmental%20Health/2018%20Childhood%20Lead%20Surveillance%20Annual%20Report.pdf>.

v United States Environmental Protection Agency, Protect Your Family from Sources of Lead, June 15, 2026, <https://www.epa.gov/lead/protect-your-family-sources-lead>.

vi US Census

vii Pennsylvania Department of Public Health, (2022). 2022 Childhood Lead Surveillance Annual Report. <https://www.pa.gov/content/dam/copa/pwp-pagov/en/health/documents/topics/documents/environmental-health/2022%20Childhood%20Lead%20Surveillance%20Annual%20Report%20PDF.pdf>