

For Immediate Release

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Hunterdon County Division of Health Enhances Lead Poisoning Prevention Efforts

Nearly half a million children living in the United States have elevated blood lead levels that may cause significant damage to their health, estimates the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). There is no safe blood lead level in children, and exposure can affect nearly every system in the body. Lead exposure often occurs with no obvious symptoms, and it frequently goes unrecognized. Major sources of lead exposure to U.S. children include lead-based paint and lead-contaminated dust in deteriorating buildings. Children can be exposed to lead from additional sources including pottery, consumer products, contaminated drinking water, take-home exposures from a workplace, and soil.

Hunterdon County is deemed one of the healthiest counties in New Jersey, known for being a clean community, rich with parks and recreational resources. “Part of the charm of Hunterdon County comes with the beauty of historical homes and sites throughout our towns. The Hunterdon County Division of Health works to ensure that our children are living safely in older homes and are free from exposure to other sources of lead as well,” said Suzanne Lagay, Freeholder.

How does the County Health Division protect children from lead poisoning? It is recommended that all children get tested for lead twice before the age of 6. If tests reveal that a child’s blood contains more than 5 mg/dl, the case is referred to the Hunterdon County Division of Health for follow-up. The Division of Health nurses and Registered Environmental Health Specialists work directly with the family of the lead-poisoned child to determine the cause of lead poisoning. County health staff test surfaces the home for lead with specialized equipment, and look for other items that may cause lead poisoning. The public health nurses provide case management and health education, and assist the family with medical treatment for the child as needed.

One of the goals of the Hunterdon County Division of Health is to prevent illness in our residents. In 2018, the Hunterdon County Division of Health was awarded a grant for childhood lead exposure prevention, in a collaborative application with Warren, Somerset, and Morris counties. Grant dollars fund health education programs for parents and caregivers about the dangers of lead poisoning, and increase lead screening access for early detection.

For more information about childhood lead poisoning prevention, visit the Hunterdon County Division of Public Health website at <http://www.co.hunterdon.nj.us/health.htm> or call 908-788-1351.