



STATE OF MICHIGAN

GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
LANSING

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MDHHS updating definition of elevated blood lead levels for children based on new CDC blood reference value

Lower level will expand services to more Michigan families

LANSING, Mich. – The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services is updating its definition of an elevated blood lead level for children from 5 µg/dL to 3.5 µg/dL, following the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention updating their blood lead reference value (BLRV).

The BLRV is used to identify children with higher levels of lead in their blood compared to most children in the United States. The BLRV is not health-based but is used as a tool to identify children who need public health services and further medical evaluation. It is also used to prioritize communities that need interventions to reduce lead exposure. There is no safe level of lead in blood. MDHHS has been working over the past several months to update health care providers about this change and update Medicaid policies to reflect the new reference level.

“Using this lower value as a threshold allows us to initiate public health actions earlier to prevent ongoing exposure and mitigate health effects of lead exposure to Michigan children,” said Dr. Natasha Bagdasarian, chief medical executive. “There is no known safe level of lead in a child’s blood and this new reference level will help expand services to more Michigan families.”

There are a variety of services to minimize health impacts of lead exposure and prevent future exposure that are available through state and local public health for children with elevated blood lead levels. Services previously offered to children with blood lead levels greater than or equal to 4.5 µg/dL, including nursing case management, home environmental lead investigations and lead abatement, will be expanded to eligible families and households with children with confirmed blood lead levels greater than or equal to 3.5 µg/dL.

Lead exposure can come from many sources including paint in homes built before 1978, dust, soil, drinking water from older plumbing, jobs or hobbies that involve lead, and some imported goods.

It's important for parents and caretakers of children less than 6 years old to talk to their child's health care provider about blood lead testing, especially if there is concern for lead exposure. Lead exposure early in life has been shown to cause problems with learning, behavior, hearing and growth.

For more information on lead exposure prevention, visit Michigan.gov/MiLeadSafe.

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