

ONEIDA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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NEWS RELEASE

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Pilot Program Will Address More 'At Risk' for Lead Poisoning "Early Detection the Goal of Free Home Inspections"

Nearly one hundred inner-city children living 'at risk' for lead poisoning can be detected each year as a result of a new initiative which expands free home inspections and educational services in target areas of the City of Utica, Oneida County Executive Antony J. Picente announced today.

"It is essential that Oneida County does everything possible to protect the health and safety of our children. This pilot program gives parents of children living in high risk neighborhoods of Cornhill and West Utica the opportunity to take early action against lead hazards that are poisoning their children in their homes," Picente said. "This is one more step in our plan to eliminate childhood lead poisoning in Oneida County through the Lead Primary Prevention Program."

The State's Public Health Law requires local health departments to conduct housing inspections for lead hazards in housing units with children whose blood lead levels are 15 micrograms per deciliter or greater. Through its Lead Primary Prevention Program, Oneida County has been conducting inspections in designated high risk areas where a child's blood lead level has been 0-9 micrograms/deciliter. As of April 1st, the Oneida County Health Department through a New York State Department of Health Primary Prevention Grant, will expand its free home inspections, checking for chipping and peeling paint, to families living in high risk areas with children whose blood lead levels are 10-14 micrograms per deciliter. In addition, families of newly identified children in the 10-14 microgram/deciliter range will be offered:

- Educational materials on reducing lead risks, proper nutrition and developmental screening
- Free dust wipe sampling to identify the presence of lead dust from deteriorating lead-based paint
- Free use of a HEPA vacuum to reduce lead dust levels
- Free paint touch-up kits
- Free cleaning supplies

The program also provides property owners free lead safe work practice training and clearance testing once repairs and cleaning have been completed to insure safe lead dust levels in the home.

While there are no safe levels of lead exposure, children living in high risk areas of Utica with its aged and often deteriorating housing stock are in greater danger of lead poisoning and its long-term effects, according to Cathe Bullwinkle, Quality Improvement Coordinator for the Oneida County Health Department.

"By taking these proactive steps to identify lead poisoned children and reduce their exposure to lead hazards, we can reduce the long-term detrimental effects of lead poisoning including brain damage, learning disabilities, ADHD and behavioral problems," Bullwinkle said.

For more information on lead, visit our web site at ocgov.net and click on 'Lead Information,' or contact the Lead Primary Prevention program at 266-6147.