



# ALLEGHENY COUNTY

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## **Lead Task Force Releases Recommendations and Final Report**

**PITTSBURGH** – County Executive Rich Fitzgerald and members of the Lead Task Force appointed last May held a press conference today to release the recommendations of the task force and its final report to the public. The 58-page document includes 24 recommendations in seven categories based on the best, currently-available science to best protect the public's health.

"I commend Dr. Hacker and the members of the Task Force for their diligent work and expertise that they brought to the table in providing direction to continue to improve the health of our county," said Fitzgerald. "These recommendations, while based in science and reflective of best practices, also tell us a lot about the science, our industrial heritage, the community and what our residents do in response to concerns about lead."

In May 2017, Fitzgerald commissioned the Lead Task Force with nine members, charging them with reviewing county data, examining potential policies, and reviewing strategies and literature related to childhood lead exposure in the county. The group met regularly throughout the summer and fall of 2017, spoke with 20 local and nationally-recognized experts, and also reviewed the literature, numerous research studies, and received recommendations from the public and parents.

"Lead is ubiquitous in our environment, and there is no safe lead level in children. We must address the risk of exposure to this lead in all its forms using both primary prevention and post-exposure intervention strategies," said Dr. Karen Hacker, Chair of the Lead Task Force and Director of the Health Department. "We must also acknowledge lead exposure as a health equity issue that must be resolved. The Task Force recognizes that while progress has been made to address lead exposure, lead continues to represent a threat to human health. The broad recommendations outlined in the report will take efforts from multiple partners to achieve, which include housing providers, municipal and county government, education, foundations, non-profits and water systems. I am honored to have chaired the Task Force and to have worked with such an excellent group of experts. We look forward to having this report and its recommendations inform our collaborative work to protect the public's health."

The Task Force concluded that both primary prevention and intervention strategies are required, although only primary prevention will lead to a continuing overall reduction in childhood lead exposure and should, therefore, be prioritized. The recommendations developed by the task force relate to the leading sources of lead exposure in the county, with additional recommendations relating to monitoring, reporting, education and outreach. The Task Force also concluded that implementation of the recommendations will require cross-jurisdictional efforts, collaboration, and the engagement of multiple partners.

The recommendations are split into four main categories: (1) Control sources of lead; (2) Monitor and report information on exposure; (3) Investigate hazards, and, (4) Educate the public on community lead hazards. The first category was also broken down further to provide recommendations related to specific sources including paint, dust and other household sources; water; soil; and, alternative sources.

### Paint, Dust and Other Household Sources

1. Increase the supply of lead-safe/lead-free housing through a lead-safe/lead-free certification program;
2. Inform homeowners, housing providers and residents of lead hazards and lead exposure routes and provide information on opportunities and requirements for remediation;
3. Establish programs that financially support lead remediation;
4. Prioritize settings where children spend substantial portions of time;
5. Advocate for state and federal resources to support remediation of lead hazards in housing, child care facilities and schools; and

6. Increase the number of lead-safe contractors by expanding training and certification programs.

#### Water

1. Reduce exposure to lead from water lines by decreasing the presence of lead containing plumbing materials (pipes, solder, fixtures);
2. Undertake short and medium-term strategies to minimize exposure;
3. Prioritize settings where children spend substantial portions of time; and
4. Advocate for improved national standards.

#### Soil

1. Improve demolition standards and conformity to those standards;
2. Identify and remediate contaminated soil; and
3. Support home owners and housing providers to test and remediate lead in soil.

#### Alternative Sources

1. Identify and eliminate alternative sources of exposure to lead;
2. Identify high-risk occupations and hobbies and encourage appropriate lead-safe practices to protect workers and their families; and
3. Advocate for additional federal regulations to identify and eliminate importation of lead containing items that pose risk to children.

#### Monitoring and Reporting Information on Risk and Exposure

1. Identify communities in the county with high-risk for lead exposure;
2. Enhance surveillance efforts to address actionable interventions; and
3. Enhance public reporting.

#### Investigation of Hazards

1. Monitor changes to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) guidelines for management of elevated blood lead levels and adjust programming accordingly;
2. Conduct primary prevention investigations in homes based on risk factors (see recommendation for paint, dust and home hazards); and
3. Provide linkage to resources for all children with elevated blood lead levels based on CDC guidelines.

#### Public Awareness and Advocacy

1. Reconstitute a community lead advisory committee such as the prior "Lead Safe Pittsburgh" organization as a countywide working group; and
2. Expand education strategies on the hazards of lead and strategies for remediation.

In addition to the recommendations noted above, the Task Force provides a full discussion of what they learned in each of the recommendation areas.

"I thank the members of the Task Force for their diligent work on this issue. To have individuals of their caliber participate in this effort and give of their time, energies and talents is remarkable," said Fitzgerald. "We owe Patrick Dowd, Councilman Richard Ford, Dr. Bernard Goldstein, Dr. Karen Hacker, Dr. Deborah Moss, Dr. Amy Nevin, Director Valerie McDonald Roberts, Jeanne VanBriesen and Dr. Sharon Watkins a great debt of gratitude, and thank them for this report."

The full report also includes a brief history of lead in the United States and in Allegheny County, as well as a summary of current known data and current activities in Allegheny County and other resources may be found at: <http://www.achd.net/lead/pubs/pdf/taskforce-report.pdf>.

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