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U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Secretary Ben Carson



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Brian Sullivan
(202) 708-0685

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HUD ISSUES FINAL RULE TO HELP CHILDREN EXPOSED TO LEAD PAINT HAZARDS
Stricter definition of "elevated blood lead level" in young children matches CDC approach

WASHINGTON - In an effort to respond quickly when young children living in federally housing experience elevated levels of lead in their blood, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) today published a new rule lowering the Department's threshold of lead in the child's blood to match the more protective guidance of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). HUD's new action level for lead in a young child's blood has been lowered from 20 micrograms of lead per deciliter of blood ($\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$) to 5. [Read HUD's new rule.](#)

This important change to HUD's Lead Safe Housing Rule will allow for a faster response when a young child (specifically, under six years old) is exposed to lead-based paint hazards in their HUD-assisted homes, a key component of a primary prevention strategy.

"Today, we're now able to say that the federal government will speak with one voice when it comes to protecting children from potentially dangerous lead," said HUD Secretary Castro. "By aligning our standard with CDC's guidance, we can respond more quickly in cases when a child who lives in federally assisted housing shows early signs of having elevated levels of lead in their blood."

Senator Susan Collins of Maine said, "I am pleased that the Department of Housing and Urban Development has updated its blood lead threshold, a change I have long advocated for, which will help protect countless children from the harmful, often permanent effects of lead poisoning. Since the beginning of my Senate service, I have worked to raise awareness and secure funding to address this largely preventable health problem, which remains one of the most prevalent environmental issues facing children today. We must continue our efforts to eradicate this health threat."

Senator Richard Durbin of Illinois added, "Lead poisoning is entirely preventable, yet too many families in America are living with its devastating consequences. We can and must do more to protect our children from this deadly threat and give them a fair shot at reaching their full potential." said Durbin. "The measures announced by HUD today will undoubtedly save lives. I commend Secretary Castro for updating the Department's lead level standards and taking concrete steps toward ensuring that children living in federally-subsidized housing are adequately protected from lead exposure."

Dr. David Jacobs of the National Center for Healthy Housing and the National Safe and Healthy Housing Coalition said, "This is an important and welcome contribution to the nation's efforts to address childhood lead poisoning. We know how to solve this problem—find the hazards, fix them and provide the human and financial means to make that happen."

Young children living in HUD-assisted homes have lower blood lead levels than do comparable children in unassisted homes. Still, some young children living in HUD-assisted homes have blood lead levels higher than CDC's threshold. By lowering HUD's reference level to conform to CDC's, the Department

will be able to intervene more quickly to stop the negative impact lead can have on the lives of these and other young children.

When a child under age six resides in HUD-assisted housing and has an elevated blood level, the housing provider will have to test the home and other potential sources of the child's lead exposure within 15 days, and ensure that hazards from lead-based paint, dust, or soil are controlled within 30 days. The housing provider must also report the case to HUD so the Department can ensure that follow-up is completed on time. To enable housing providers to prepare for these more stringent requirements, HUD is providing a six-month phase-in period before compliance will be required.

This rule will cover about 3 million HUD-assisted housing units built before 1978, the year lead-based paint was banned for residential use. Of these homes, about 500,000 are estimated to have children under age six residing in them.

HUD has a long history of working to ensure lead-safe housing, which fits into the broader federal response to address lead hazards found in paint, dust and soil, and other sources like water and consumer goods. For 25 years, HUD's *Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes* has worked to improve methods to identify and address home-related health and safety hazards, including those from lead. Since 1993, HUD has awarded more than \$1.58 billion in grants to communities for identification and control of lead-based paint hazards in over 190,000 low-income privately owned housing units. In addition, HUD supports research on best practices for identifying and controlling lead-based paint hazards, and conducts an outreach program to get out the message.

HUD's key federal partners share an extensive history of work to prevent children's lead exposure. For example, the CDC's *Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program* developed programs and policies to prevent childhood lead poisoning and provided funding to state and local health departments to determine the extent of childhood lead poisoning. The Environmental Protection Agency's lead-based paint program has increased the quality of training of lead inspectors, renovation professionals and abatement firms who work on older homes. Summarizing federal lead safety activities, HUD, CDC, EPA, and the 14 additional federal agencies on the President's Task Force on Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks to Children recently published a report on [**Key Federal Programs to Reduce Childhood Lead Exposures and Eliminate Associated Health Impacts.**](#)