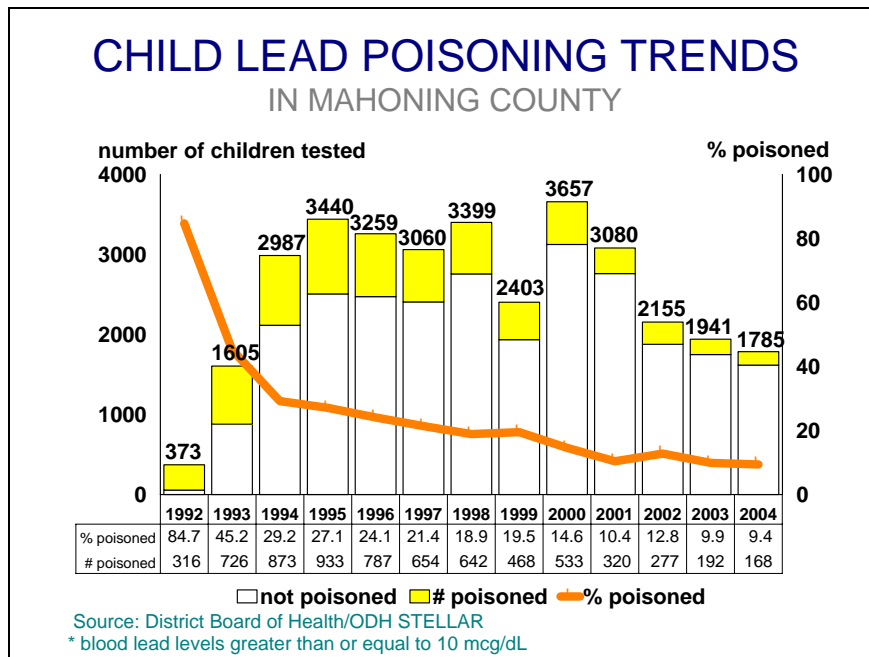




AN ACTION PLAN TO ELIMINATE CHILDHOOD LEAD POISONING

Despite a significant investment of public funds in the identification and remediation of lead hazards in children’s homes and a steady decline in the number of lead-poisoned children (see figure below), lead poisoning remains the most common environmental health disease threatening children in Mahoning County.

Unless steps are taken to protect young children from continued exposure to lead, many will suffer irreversible developmental delays, start school with learning impediments, and exhibit delinquent behavior when they reach adolescence. Public health officials estimate that child lead poisoning costs local taxpayers more than \$0.5 million each year for special education, medical care, and juvenile justice. Many families with young children in Mahoning County still live in homes with uncontrolled lead hazards; as of June, 2004, 258 rental properties in Youngstown that had already poisoned children had not been made lead-safe and children were still living in many of these properties.



Concerned about the persistently high number of residential properties with unremediated lead hazards that could place many more children at risk, the Mahoning County Family First Council began a campaign in 2003 to advocate for the elimination of this disease from Mahoning County by 2010.

With support from the Raymond John Wean Foundation, the Council convened a Childhood Lead Poisoning Call to Action in March 2004 attended by more than 100 area officials, health professionals, and child advocates that featured national lead poisoning experts. The Council followed up this event with presentations and letters to Youngstown City Council and the Mayor asking them to step up enforcement against property owners who had ignored orders to address lead hazards. In September 2004, Mayor George McKelvey appointed a special city prosecutor to pursue enforcement action against these property owners. The special prosecutor began filing complaints against these property owners in Mahoning County Common Pleas Court in October 2005.

With funding from the Foundation, the local landlord association, and county government, the Council then convened a consensus-building process led by a trained facilitator recruited through the Ohio Commission on Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management. Many stakeholders, including the landlord association, public health and community development officials, educational leaders, juvenile justice officials, private mortgage lenders, and church leaders, were invited to participate. These organizations were represented in the consensus-building process:

Alliance for Congregational Transformation Influencing Our Neighborhoods
Associated Neighborhood Centers
Catholic Diocese of Youngstown
Forum Health Tod Children's Hospital
Home Saving & Loan Company
Interfaith Home Maintenance Services
Mahoning County Children Services
Mahoning County Commissioners
Mahoning County District Board of Health
Mahoning County Family and Children First Council
Mahoning County Juvenile Court
Mahoning County Lead-Based Paint Hazard Control Program
Mahoning County Mental Health Board
Mahoning Valley Real Estate Investment Association
Youngstown City Council
Youngstown City Health District
Youngstown City School District
Youngstown-Columbiana Association of Realtors

After one-on-one interviews with key stakeholders, the facilitator convened a series of eight major work sessions with all stakeholders between May 2004 and July 2005 that resulted in the development of this Action Plan to Eliminate Childhood Lead Poisoning from Mahoning County by 2010. This Action Plan relies on three main strategies to eliminate this disease from the community:

- Test the children who are not getting tested for lead poisoning
- Communicate with one voice to the community about childhood lead poisoning
- Reduce the number of non-compliant housing units

At the conclusion of the consensus-building process in July 2005, a steering committee was appointed to seek endorsement of the Action Plan from other community organizations. As of September 2005, the Action Plan has been endorsed by the Mahoning County Family First Council and Alliance for Congregational Transformation Influencing Our Neighborhoods (ACTION). ACTION subsequently held a Holy Ground March to draw attention to the 25 properties with unremediated lead hazards that are on the waiting list for housing demolition in Youngstown.

Stakeholders are encouraged by the short-term results of these collaborative efforts: as of September 16, 2005, the number of unremediated rental properties in Mahoning County had been reduced to 171, a 34% decline since May 2004, the first decline since the boards of health began monitoring lead hazards in 1996.

For its efforts to facilitate this community consensus for childhood lead poisoning elimination, the Mahoning County Family First Council received a 2005 Children's Environmental Health Award from the United States Environmental Protection Agency. The Awards are granted to recognize ongoing and sustainable dedication and leadership in protecting children from environmental health risks at the local, regional, national, and international levels.

For more information about this Action Plan and its development, please contact Rachilla Basista, Council Administrator at voice 330-965-7828 email mcoe_rwb@access-k12.org or Matthew Stefanak, Council Chair at voice 330-270-2855 email mstefanak@mahoning-health.org.



The Mahoning County Family and Children First Council is a coalition of more than 55 public and private agencies serving families and children in Mahoning County. Its mission is to promote, maintain, and facilitate community collaboration of multi-system services to children and families. For more information about Family First, visit the Council website at www.familyandchildrenfirst.co.mahoning.oh.us.



Mahoning County Family and Children First Council

Raymond John Wean Foundation

Mahoning County Lead-Based Paint Hazard Control Program

Mahoning Valley Real Estate Investment Association

GOAL

Eliminate* childhood lead poisoning from Mahoning County by 2010.

***less than 2% of children screened in 2010 will have blood lead levels 10 micrograms per deciliter or higher (baseline: 9.4% in 2004)**

STRATEGY #1

REDUCE THE NUMBER OF NON-COMPLIANT HOUSING UNITS

A. DOCUMENTATION

- ◆ Continue to maintain the most accurate and complete information on housing units out of compliance with lead hazard control requirements (**baseline: 344 unremediated units on May 4, 2005 – 176 rentals, 168 owner-occupied**).
- ◆ Provide information about unremediated lead hazards to property buyers through the Mahoning County Recorder's Office.
- ◆ Disclose lead hazards to all future buyers and occupants as required by federal law.

B. ENFORCEMENT

- ◆ Periodically re-notify property owners with unremediated lead hazards.
- ◆ Refer for prosecution landlords who continue to rent properties with unremediated lead hazards.
- ◆ Actively enforce lead hazard control regulations through the office of the city prosecutor.
- ◆ Monitor progress of the special prosecutor in reducing the number of unremediated rental properties.
- ◆ Secure long term funding for special prosecutor.

C. ABATEMENT / REMEDIATION

- ◆ Assist cooperative property owners with financial and informational resources to remediate unsafe lead conditions

D. DEMOLITION

- ◆ Assist cooperative property owners with financial resources to demolish out-of-compliance housing units beyond the possibilities of rehabilitation
- ◆ Promote collaboration among elected officials, housing, and public health officials to give priority for demolition of properties with unremediated lead hazards.

E. MAINTAINING LEAD SAFE HOUSING

- ◆ Continue to distribute a checklist to property owners and tenants for recommended preventative maintenance.

STRATEGY #2

COMMUNICATION WITH ONE VOICE TO THE COMMUNITY ABOUT CHILDHOOD LEAD POISONING

A. INTER-AGENCY COMMUNICATIONS

- ◆ Continue to work on open communications among all organizations engaged in work related to childhood lead poisoning in order to:
 - demonstrate a united effort to eliminate childhood lead poisoning and
 - ensure that the correct information is disseminated in the community.

B. LEADERSHIP COLLABORATION

- ◆ Clarify the big picture about childhood lead poisoning and the actions necessary by government, private, and not-for-profit sectors to eliminate lead hazards.
- ◆ Leverage existing resources for greater impact through a new synergy among stakeholders.
- ◆ Use the persuasion of leadership to get action from reluctant partners in the process.

C. NEIGHBORHOOD-BASED APPROACHES

- ◆ Engage in "face-to-face" and "one-on-one" communications with families about the real effect of childhood lead poisoning; for example, use existing federal, state, and county publications to support this communication
- ◆ Conduct neighborhood forums on childhood lead poisoning with neighborhood-based organizations.

◆ D. HOUSING INDUSTRY APPROACHES

- ◆ Use the venues and networks already developed for professionals in the housing industry to:
 - provide professional education on remediation of lead hazards
 - identify special loan programs available for remediation and/or demolition of housing units with lead hazards, and
 - maintain a sense of urgency in eliminating the number of unremediated housing units.

- ◆ Conduct outreach to those who have inherited housing units and do not have any professional expertise in the management and maintenance of these units.

E. HEALTH CARE APPROACHES

- ◆ Maintain linkages among health care professionals to strengthen communications for a united voice for eliminating childhood lead poisoning.

F. CONTINUE TO CONVENE STAKEHOLDERS

- ◆ Continue a consensus-building, action planning and implementation process among stakeholders.

G. INVOLVEMENT OF MEDIA

- ◆ Engage local and regional media in communicating to the community about childhood lead poisoning—what is being done about it and how to keep children safe from this danger.

STRATEGY #3

TEST THE CHILDREN WHO ARE NOT GETTING TESTED FOR LEAD POISONING*

- ◆ Increase the screening of children for lead poisoning. For example, the Lead Hazard Control Program will fund door to door screening of children in its next grant cycle.
- ◆ Assure that public health professionals are involved in directing resources for finding new cases of lead poisoning.
- ◆ Identify new approaches to connect with families in neighborhoods in order to bring home the message of the real effects of childhood lead poisoning – short-term and long-term – and the basic responsibilities families have in maintaining healthy homes – as home owners or as tenants in collaboration with their landlords.
- ◆ Work with private practice physicians to promote compliance with new state laws requiring them to screen children at risk for lead poisoning

***baseline: 26.5% of children under age 3 living in high risk zip codes were tested in 2003)**