

Protect Kids. Create Jobs.



Invest in the SCHIP Lead Program to Safeguard Where Children Live and Play

ACTION

Make the overextended state child health insurance program lead hazard control program (“SCHIP Lead Program”) available to more children by doubling the current \$10 million to \$20 million over the biennium. Require that 50% of the funding support the primary prevention track to remove lead hazards before a child is lead poisoned.

Why the concern?

More than 425,235 of the pre-1978 homes in Ohio that are likely to have lead dust and paint are estimated to have children under 6 years old living in them. Children risk injecting toxic lead dust both through normal wear and tear in these old homes, especially around windows and doors due to high friction and inadvertently during home repair or renovation projects that disturb paint. In addition, there are about 1,200 homes with 2nd lead hazard control orders (LHCOs) throughout Ohio, meaning homes where children already tested with lead poisoning. Despite these orders and lead risks, property owners are falling short in addressing the lead hazards. Awareness-raising, education and funding are needed to support property owners in removing lead hazards.

What is the SCHIP Lead Program?

The SCHIP lead abatement program provides \$10 million over the current biennium for permanent removal off lead-based paint in homes built before 1978 where children or pregnant women are living. A portion of this funding also supports the Ohio Lead Safe Rental Registry. The SCHIP lead program has two tracks: Phase 1 prioritizes lead abatement in homes with LHCOs due to a child being lead poisoned. Phase 2 focuses on primary prevention by targeting homes in census tracts deemed high risk for lead and removing lead hazards before a child is lead poisoned.

The problem is that Ohio is still playing catch-up with all the homes with LHCOs to try and remove lead where children live and has been unable to effectively implement Phase 2. A requirement that at least 50% of the SCHIP funding be deployed to remove lead hazards in pre-1978 homes where children live but have not tested for lead would help to proactively prevent lead poisoning.

The SCHIP lead program is a very effective strategy but is severely overextended and unable to meet the huge demand. This is especially urgent during the COVID pandemic with

children spending more time indoors, potentially increasing lead exposure if they live in old homes.

- The SCHIP lead program is only funded to abate lead in about 125 homes a year.
- Over 200 properties on the SCHIP waitlist have been approved with more requests pending.
- As a result, many families are currently on the waitlist without access to needed lead abatement. ODH had to stop taking applications in May 2020 (other than emergency referrals), despite the reality that hundreds more homes would be eligible.

Extending the Impact of the SCHIP Lead Program Benefits Ohio Workers & Children

The SCHIP lead program contracts with a lead abatement contractor that sub-contracts with lead abatement contractors and risk assessors to conduct lead abatement and clearance activities. Property owners of pre-1978 units with eligible families can apply for this funding to support the removal of lead hazards. The SCHIP lead abatement program serves as a small but vital tool in the much larger primary prevention toolbox to tackle child lead poisoning in Ohio.