

City of Dubuque's Lead-Based Paint Hazard Control & Reduction Program
SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM THAT THE PROGRAM WAS CREATED TO ADDRESS

The City of Dubuque has some of the oldest housing stock in Iowa. While Dubuque takes great pride in retaining and maintaining a rich historic heritage of century-old homes and buildings, this historic housing stock comes with a vast amount of aging lead-based painted surfaces. Of the 22,377 housing units in the city, 41% were built prior to 1940; 61% were built prior to 1960; and 92% were built prior to 1978 – the year lead paint was banned. It is estimated that 5,000 low- and very low-income rental units and more than 8,000 low- and very low-income owners have some incident of lead-based paint. In other words, approximately 59% of Dubuque's housing stock has some incidence of lead paint.

Based on 2000 census tract figures, the majority of housing stock with lead-based paint is in the downtown Dubuque area, which includes the largest percentage of older homes and renter-occupied properties, the largest number of children under the age of six, and the greatest concentration of lowest median household incomes.

The City of Dubuque has compiled data on childhood lead poisoning since 1992, first in cooperation with the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) and more recently, since 1994, through its own Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program (CLPPP). Since 1992, approximately 11% of the children screened in Dubuque have been identified as lead poisoned as defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) recommended guideline of 10 g/dL. The number of children less than six years of age in the city of Dubuque is 4,334 or 19% of Dubuque's population, (according to 2000 census data.) Of the children tested in the targeted census tracts, 11.1% of the children tested have blood lead levels above the 10 g/dL action level, compared to 10% of the children tested jurisdiction wide with blood lead levels above the 10 g/dL action level. Dubuque's lead poisoning prevalence is higher than both the national average and the Iowa average.

Since August 1997, the City's HUD Round 4 Lead-Based Paint Hazard Reduction Program has been offering deferred payment loans to income-qualifying owners whose properties are located within

City of Dubuque's Lead-Based Paint Hazard Control & Reduction Program

the target area of the program in order to make the units lead-safe. This primary prevention activity offers deferred payment loans to property owners before a child becomes lead-poisoned. Furthermore, the housing rehabilitation program offered low-income and deferred-payment loans to homeowners and landlords who wished to make their properties lead-safe during building rehabilitation.

Eleven percent of all households in Dubuque occupy the <50% of Area Median Income (AMI). This is compared to 17% of all households in the selected census tracts for the program. In the selected program area, 38% of the households are below the 80% AMI. In 1999, 2,087 families in the city of Dubuque were below the poverty level. For the selected census tracts for lead-based paint hazard reduction program, 1,249 families were below the poverty level. This is 62% of the total number of families below the poverty level in Dubuque.

MEASURABLE OUTCOME(S)/RESULTS(S) OF THE PROGRAM

Since the program began in 1997, the following results have been achieved:

Housing Units Inspected: Staff have inspected 685 housing units and 464 units were made lead-safe. An additional 51 units were made lead-safe using a pilot test treatment program created during the term of the grant.

Increased Screening for Lead Poisoning: Support from Dubuque's pediatricians and family practice physicians has continued and grown since the inception of the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program, resulting in more lead screening of children ages 0-6 years. Because of these increased screening procedures and earlier detection, the number of affected children with blood lead levels greater than 10 (g/dL) micrograms of lead per deciliter of blood (the national guideline) has decreased.

Solid Health/Housing Partnership: Both the City Health Services Department and the Housing and Community Development Department bring their expertise to the issues involved in lead poisoning. Through their collaboration, all facets of the grant were implemented and new procedures have been developed in both areas to support ongoing prevention, education, and awareness activities.

City of Dubuque's Lead-Based Paint Hazard Control & Reduction Program

Community Partnerships: This preventable health problem can be shared by numerous local partners who have a stake in the health of Dubuque's citizens. Many organizations have become community partners and continue to support the lead poisoning prevention movements, including: Dubuque Visiting Nurse Association, City of Dubuque Economic Development Department, Dubuque Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Coalition, Dubuque Landlord Association, Hillcrest/WIC, and numerous neighborhood associations.

Tenant Education and Contractor Training: Specialized training, tools, and equipment have been made available for homeowners, tenants, landlords, and contractors so they can safely and easily make properties ready for occupancy without having to purchase costly equipment to achieve lead-safe housing. Over 400 contractors and/or workers have been certified and 210 inspectors and risk assessors have been certified.

Forgivable Loans to Local Homeowners and Rental Property Owners: Deferred payment loans in the amount of approximately \$5,000 each were given to 464 qualified owner-occupied and rental unit owners who made their units lead-safe. Certified, trained contractors were hired to complete this work.

Community Awareness: Grant funds have made possible the purchase of advertisements and the development of brochures, presentations, community fairs, and other educational tools to create awareness about lead poisoning and its prevention. Local media created articles and area outlets agreed to make materials available to interested persons. These outlets included: Carnegie-Stout Public Library, Keystone Area Education Agency, Hillcrest/WIC, the Visiting Nurse Association, the Dubuque Community Schools, and local stores where paint products are sold.

LESSONS LEARNED DURING PLANNING, IMPLEMENTATION, AND ANALYSIS

Broad and focused community education and awareness is a vital component of this CLPPP. Not only did lead education garner community support and knowledge, along with equipping contractors with technical skills and expertise, it transferred into other areas of housing improvement, renovation, and child health. As community partnerships grew, lead poisoning was incorporated into

City of Dubuque's Lead-Based Paint Hazard Control & Reduction Program

more children's programs and contractor activities resulted in improved upkeep and weatherization practices for properties. Lead Hazard Reduction Remediation can be done safely and relatively cheaply in conjunction with property upkeep and weatherization activities. Installation of new doors and windows improve heating efficiency and lower lead paints hazards simultaneously.

Property owners need education on how to safely maintain and repair aging housing stock. Educational programs, specialized tools and training can result in the safe renovation and repair of existing housing. It was also learned early on that in order for a contractor to be successful in safe lead removal, assistance was needed not only for clerical and business functions but also for insurance purchasing and lower fees for courses for this very specialized field.

This program also requires continual monitoring and evaluation. Tenants, property owners, and city inspectors must be taught to continually monitor properties for signs of further deterioration and lead dust, which is often difficult once a job is complete and payments are made. Monitoring the dust levels in living environments is an important indicator of the likelihood of a child developing an elevated blood lead level. Properties with high lead-in-dust levels are likely to house children with elevated blood lead levels. Lowering lead-in-dust levels by eliminating deteriorated painted surfaces and specialized cleaning will lower lead-in-blood levels in children.

Most importantly, a project of this scope requires a dedicated interdepartmental partnership. Both the Health and Housing Department's involvement are necessary to provide medical case management and health follow-up as well as improved housing conditions and housing maintenance. Weekly meetings between lead supervisory staff from both departments are vital to keep the program on schedule, running as smoothly as possible, and allow communication for both problem-solving and creativity.