



## WHAT STATE LEADERS CAN DO

- Provide free state-certified lead inspections of the homes of the 100,000 babies born in New Jersey every year
- Double the funding for the existing lead remediation program in order to reach 1,000 more homes per year

**Kids should not be used as lead detectors: prevent lead poisoning before it starts.**

New Jersey has some of the country’s highest rates of childhood lead poisoning and exposure, with more than 5,800 kids annually having blood lead levels above the Centers for Disease Control’s blood lead reference level. Lead is a powerful toxin that stunts mental and physical growth for kids.

According to a 2010 estimate, nearly two-thirds (2.4 million) of New Jersey’s homes were built prior to 1978, when lead paint was banned in the United States.

The only effective way to stop lead poisoning before it starts is to remove lead from homes and the environment before children are exposed. Lead exposure in children causes lifelong health, educational and developmental impacts, in particular for children exposed at a very young age.

### Children have high blood lead levels all across New Jersey...

**Every \$1 spent on lead removal in homes yields a return of \$17 in reduced costs associated with childhood lead exposure.<sup>1</sup>**

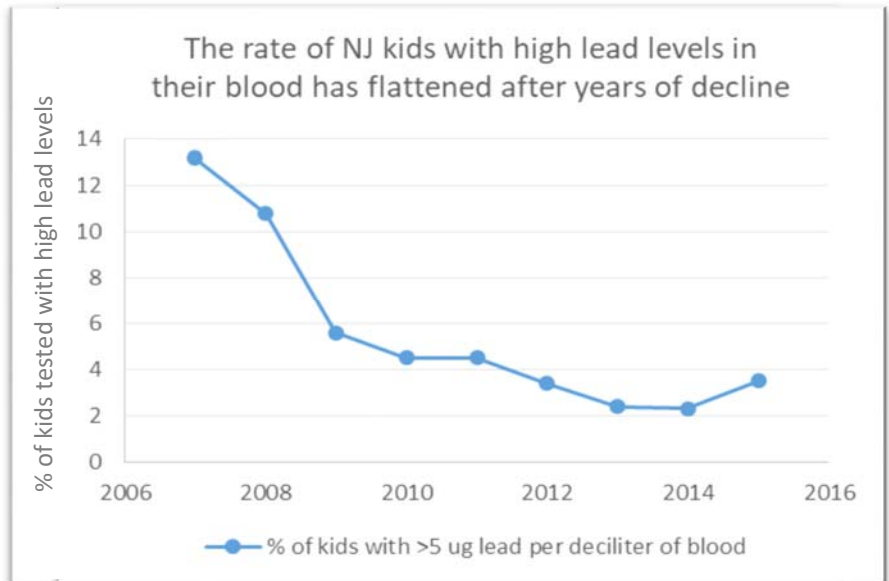
Areas of High Concentration	# Under Age 6 Tested with High Blood-Lead Levels	% Under Age 6 Tested with High Blood-Lead Levels
Salem County	806	10%
Atlantic City	1,676	9%
Irvington	2,704	8%
Trenton	3,536	6%
Cumberland County	3,058	6%
Newark	14,257	6%

Source: New Jersey Department of Health, 2015



Advocates for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ) has been at the forefront of statewide efforts to reduce and eliminate lead exposure and poisoning for more than a decade. Childhood lead poisoning is 100 percent preventable, yet each year thousands of New Jersey children continue to be exposed.

New Jersey has made great strides in reducing rates of poisoning through aggressive funding and public advocacy campaigns, but in recent years, the rate of kids with high amounts of lead in their blood has plateaued or even risen. New Jersey has paid renewed attention to this persistent problem, with the legislature passing new laws to lower the blood lead level triggering required health department responses. Governor Chris Christie has included an additional \$10 million in next year's budget for a pilot program for lead remediation in approximately 500 housing units. Additionally, city and county health departments are gearing up to help support the 3,000 additional children requiring intervention for high lead levels.



Unfortunately, New Jersey still has a long way to go. Low-level lead exposure is pervasive, with 25 percent of all tested children having some detectable lead in their blood. Experts now recognize that even very low levels of lead in blood can permanently affect IQ, ability to pay attention, and academic achievement.

The Garden State has robust screening and inspection laws on the books, requiring regular inspections for multifamily housing and required abatement when lead is found in a home. Yet these laws have been underfunded and under-enforced.

The issue is clear – New Jersey cannot rely on using children as lead detectors, waiting until kids are poisoned before responding with abatement and remediation. New Jersey's responses are reactive, targeted towards children already exposed to lead, rather than keeping them from being poisoned in the first place.

## We urge the next governor and lawmakers to make lead poisoning prevention a priority.

### What can state leaders do?

- **Commit \$30 million in lead-inspection vouchers** to guarantee that every family of the 100,000 babies born each year in New Jersey can receive a free state-certified lead inspection,
- **Expand the pilot remediation program** to an additional 500 homes for \$10 million,
- **Demand a robust lead prevention plan** and improved reporting and public information requirements.

<sup>1</sup> Gould, Elise. "Childhood Lead Poisoning: Conservative Estimates of the Social and Economic Benefits of Lead Hazard Control." *Environmental Health Perspectives* 117.7 (2009): 1162–1167. PMC. Web. 12 May 2017.