

JANUARY 2, 1998

# WISCONSIN MEDICAID UPDATE

UPDATE 98-01

TO:

County Departments of:  
Community Programs  
Human Services  
Social Services  
HealthCheck Agencies  
HMOs and Other Managed Care  
Programs  
Nurse Midwives  
Nurse Practitioners  
Physician Assistants  
Primary Care Physicians  
Tribal Human Service Facilitators

## Lead Poisoning: Number One Environmental Threat to Wisconsin Children's Health

### Wisconsin children's blood lead levels exceed national average

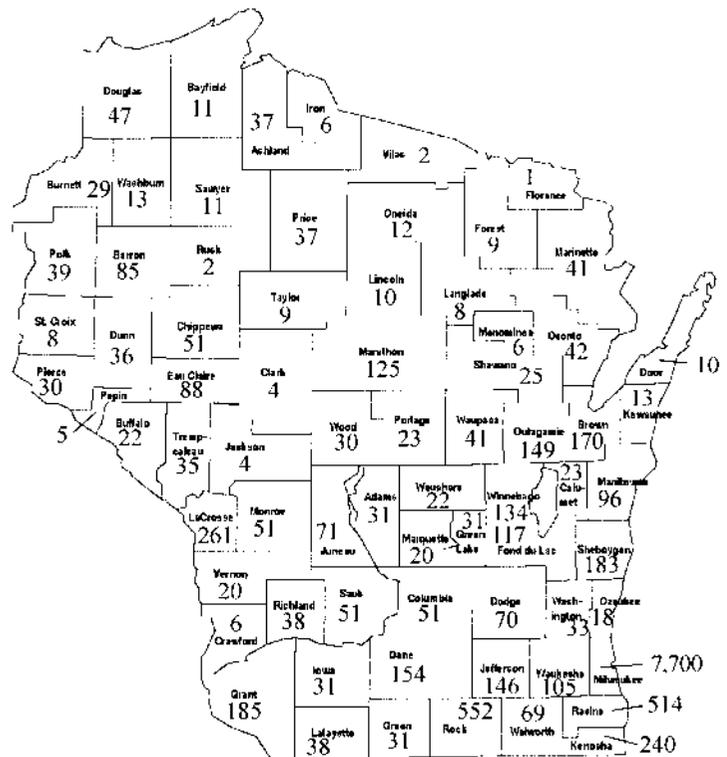
Between July 1, 1995, and June 30, 1996, 12,418 Wisconsin children had lead poisoning (19 percent of all Wisconsin children screened for blood lead). These children had a level equal to or greater than 10  $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ . The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) considers 10  $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$  the blood lead level for lead poisoning.

Of the 12,418 children with lead poisoning, 1,971 children's blood lead levels remained elevated from the previous year. (See the map to the right for the county distribution of children with lead poisoning.)

### Children at highest risk for exposure to lead

Low-income children (including those receiving Medicaid) living in older homes or poorly maintained housing are at higher risk for lead poisoning than other children. The lead-based paint used in homes built before 1950 and homes built between 1950 and 1978 undergoing renovation pose the greatest threat for a child's exposure to lead. The paint

County Distribution of Wisconsin  
Children with Lead Poisoning\*  
July 1, 1995, to June 30, 1996



\*12,418 children have lead poisoning according to statistics reported to the Bureau of Public Health.

used in older homes has a higher lead content than newer homes.

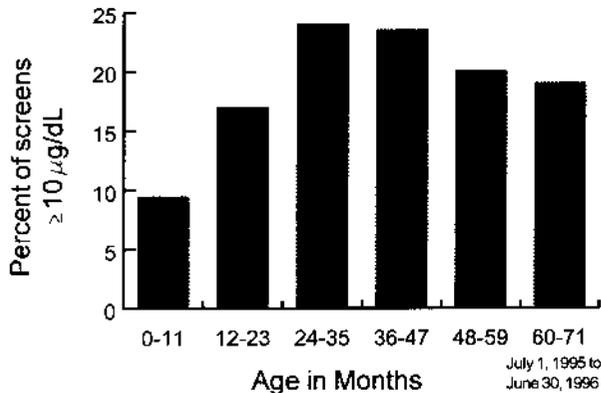
Wisconsin Medicaid is administered by the Bureau of Health Care Financing,

Division of Health, Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, P.O. Box 309, Madison, WI 53701-0309

If you have any questions, call the Division of Health Wisconsin Childhood Lead Poisoning Program at (608) 266-5817

Or write to: Division of Health, Wisconsin Childhood Lead Poisoning Program, 1414 E. Washington Avenue, Madison, WI 53703

## Percent of Children, by Age, Having Elevated Blood Lead Levels



Source: Wisconsin Childhood Lead Poisoning Program

### Certain age groups are affected more

- All children under age six are particularly susceptible to lead poisoning effects.
- Children under age three are most vulnerable to lead toxicity.
- Children under age two are at greatest risk for elevated blood lead levels (according to Wisconsin and national data). Refer to the graph above for the percent of children, by age, having elevated blood lead levels.

### Determining risk for lead poisoning

The CDC recommends that health care providers assess all children between the ages of six months and six years to determine their risk for lead poisoning. *Medicaid recipients* between these ages *must be screened* for blood lead poisoning when receiving a HealthCheck examination.

Providers may determine a child's risk for lead poisoning by using CDC 1997 revised screening guidelines. The CDC recommends that providers assess the risk by using the following three questions (which reflect the most predictable risk factors for children):

1. Does your child live in or regularly visit a house that was built before 1950?

2. Does your child live in or regularly visit a house built before 1978 with recent or ongoing renovations or remodeling (a house built between 1950 and 1978)?
3. Does your child have a sibling or playmate who has, or did have, lead poisoning?

The child is at high risk of lead poisoning if the answer is "yes" or "unknown" to any of the three questions. The child is at low risk of lead poisoning if the answer is "no" to all of these questions.

### Medicaid requirements for blood lead testing do not change

Do blood lead testing for the following children:

- All children determined "high risk" as a result of the answers to the three CDC questions.
- All Medicaid recipients at certain ages receiving a HealthCheck examination (CDC 1997 revised screening guidelines did not recommend a change in this Medicaid requirement):
  - Age one and age two.
  - Between age three and six who have never had a blood lead test.

Refer to the CDC Guidelines for information on the blood lead retesting schedule based on blood lead results and risk status. You may obtain a copy of the CDC Guidelines from the Bureau of Public Health (Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services) at (608) 266-5817.

### Family education for children with lead poisoning

The CDC recommends that providers give information to families on ways to decrease exposure to lead. Discuss the potential adverse health effects of lead poisoning. Call the Wisconsin Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program at (608) 266-5817 for samples of education materials that you may use with families.

Also, you may use the following topics when providing family education for children with lead poisoning:

*Sources of lead:*

- Lead-based paint in older homes (pre-1950).
- Remodeling/renovating pre-1978 homes.
- Parental occupations/hobbies.
- Traditional remedies or cosmetics.
- Water.
- Vinyl miniblinds.
- Pottery.
- Soil.

*Age-specific behavior that can result in lead poisoning:*

- Exploring with hands and mouth.
- Eating finger foods.
- Crawling and walking.

*Ways to decrease exposure to lead:*

- Frequently wash and rinse hands before eating, napping, during/after play.
- Wash and rinse mouthed toys and pacifiers daily.
- Keep window wells and play areas free of lead dust by washing and rinsing with a household detergent.
- Remove visible paint chips.
- Block child's access to areas of visibly deteriorating paint.

*Nutrition counseling:*

- Record diet history.
- Describe diets rich in calcium and iron and how they block lead absorption.
- Describe low fat diets and explain how fat increases lead absorption.
- Suggest frequent healthy snacks/meals to keep stomachs full, blocking lead absorption.
- Refer to Women, Infants and Children (WIC)/nutrition counseling as needed.
- Prescribe iron supplements as needed.