

5 Ways to Achieve Equity in Lead Poisoning Prevention Policy Making

Across the United States, community members, advocates, and policy makers are enacting policies to prevent lead exposure and poisoning.

Though well-intentioned, these policies may have unintended consequences for the families who are most directly impacted and often left out of the policymaking processes. These consequences can include: increased financial hardship, unfair stigmatization by blaming families, failing to identify children / households with lead risks, and prolonged exposure to lead.

Here are 5 ways elected officials and government officials can develop and implement lead poisoning prevention policies that center equity and support the needs of people of all ages, races/ethnicities, and backgrounds.

Who developed these recommendations?

In August 2018, nearly 40 national experts came together at the Equity Analysis of Lead Policies Consensus Conference in Chicago. The actions in this document are based on the deliberations and recommendations from that two-day meeting.

1. Share power with affected communities in decision making and prioritize their needs.

- Structure policy processes in collaboration with affected communities, ensuring that those who are most impacted are prioritized in all phases of policy development
- When making decisions, actively solicit and incorporate feedback from impacted families and treat their lived experience and input with the same level of consideration given to other highly-credible types of data and information



2. Comprehensively target all sources of lead in the places children spend time.

- Enact a holistic lead remediation framework that simultaneously addresses lead in water, paint, and other sources as appropriate, in homes, schools, and childcare facilities; employs permanent remediation methods when possible; and provides adequate funding for comprehensive implementation
- Require comprehensive testing of childcare and school environments, and ensure that protocols provide reliable results that can be compared to published guidelines and standards
- Eliminate lead paint hazards and lead in drinking water in housing through financing and policy mechanisms with an eye toward keeping housing affordable and avoiding tenant displacement (e.g., through systematic code enforcement)

3. Ensure ample funding for lead remediation.

- Prioritize and ensure funding for lead paint hazard control and full lead service line replacement (LSL). Funding should also support interim solutions to reduce exposure until full LSL can be achieved
- Provide financial resources for schools and childcare facilities to achieve the ultimate goal of replacing leaded fixtures, along with support to properly install and maintain filtration systems or water filling stations

4. Protect the stability and financial well-being of low-income residents.

- Minimize the financial burden on low-income residents by providing financial support when lead remediation is required (e.g., for lead service line replacement or lead paint hazard control)
- Manage utility rate increases by placing the burden on those who can pay
- Implement policies to protect tenants from eviction and displacement that could result from reporting, inspection, and remediation activities of contaminated units (e.g., through requiring evictions only for just cause, implementing rent control)
- Include requirements for temporary housing during hazard remediation to minimize household instability

5. Invest in clear communications for affected communities.

- Communicate results and remediation plans in timely, informative, and clear ways for families and communities
- Ensure public communications are accessible, consistent, and in languages spoken by impacted communities

Read the Full Report

Achieving Equity in Lead Poisoning Prevention Policy Making: Proceedings from a Consensus Conference is available online at: HumanImpact.org/LeadPolicyEquity. Email us to learn more: info@humanimpact.org.