



Report to the New York City Council on Progress in Preventing Childhood Lead Poisoning in New York City

Submitted by New York City Department of Health & Mental Hygiene
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About This Report

Local Law 1 of 2004 requires the Department of Health & Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) to annually report to the New York City Council on the progress toward reducing childhood lead poisoning and increasing blood lead testing in New York City (NYC). This report is submitted in compliance with this requirement.

Data in the report are presented in three sections:

- *Section I* describes NYC's progress in reducing the number and severity of childhood lead poisoning. While DOHMH provides lead poisoning prevention services for all children under 18 years of age, this section focuses on children under 6 years of age¹ since they are at greatest risk for lead poisoning.
- *Section II* presents data on blood lead testing for children turning 3 years of age in 2010. New York State (NYS) law requires testing of all children at or around age 1 and age 2. Consequently, before turning 3 years of age NYC children should be tested twice.
- *Section III* outlines strategies for continued progress in prevention of childhood lead poisoning.

Important Definitions in This Report

Blood lead level (BLL) is the concentration of lead, measured in micrograms in a deciliter of blood (mcg/dL).

Elevated blood lead level is the term used by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to describe a BLL equal to or greater than (\geq) 10 mcg/dL. The NYC Health Code also defines lead poisoning as a BLL of 10 mcg/dL or greater.

Environmental intervention blood lead level (EIBLL) is the term used by the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) to refer to the BLL at which environmental intervention and case coordination services for children with lead poisoning are initiated. The EIBLL is currently 15 mcg/dL.

¹In 2006, the New York City Board of Health lowered the applicable age of Local Law 1 of 2004 from under 7 years of age to under 6 years of age. Local Law 1 of 2004 authorized the Board of Health to make a determination whether or not to amend the applicable age.

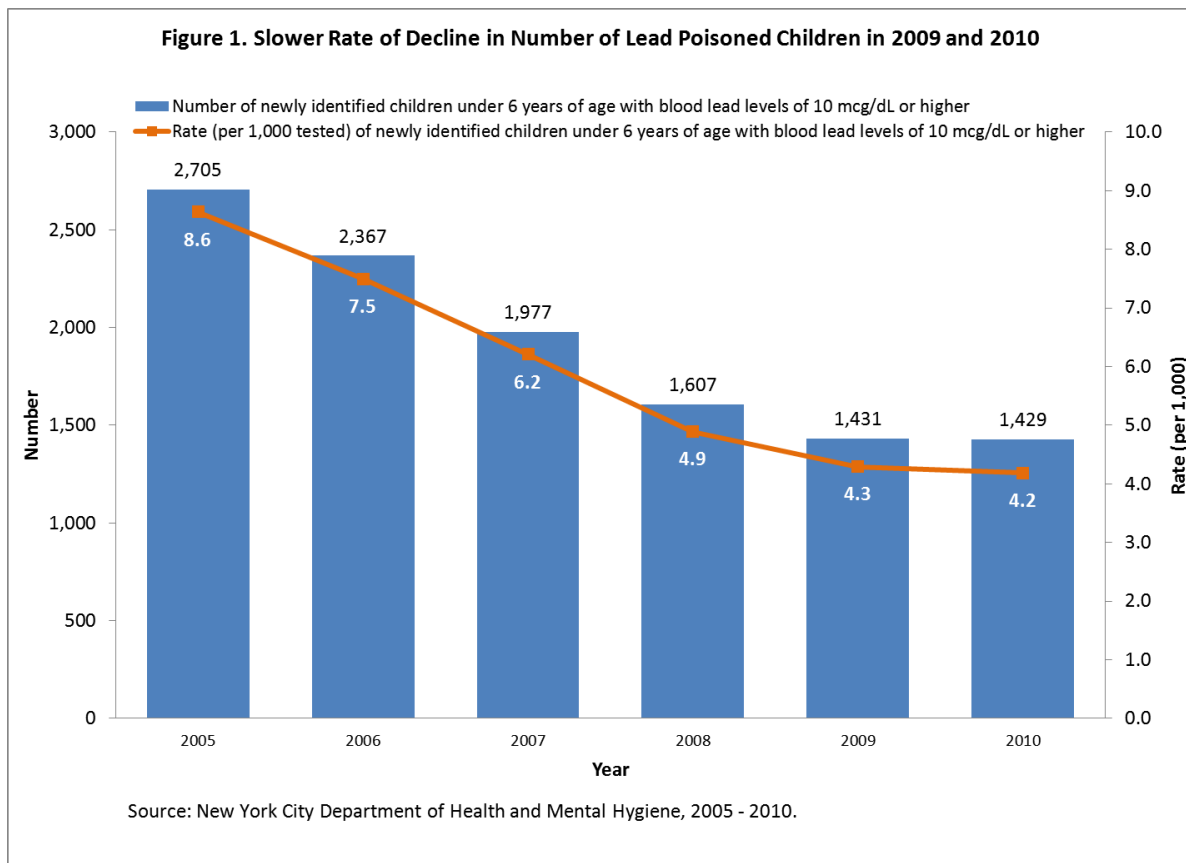
Section I Preventing Childhood Lead Poisoning in New York City

Childhood lead poisoning is a serious but preventable health problem. Over the last few decades, NYC has made significant progress in reducing childhood lead poisoning. There has been a steady decline in the overall number and rate of children with lead poisoning, and there are fewer children requiring environmental intervention for lead poisoning. However, in the most recent years, the rate of decline in childhood lead poisoning has slowed down.

Slower Rate of Decline in Number of Lead Poisoned Children

In 2010,

- 1,429 NYC children under 6 years of age were newly identified with blood lead levels of 10 mcg/dL or higher, similar to 2009 when 1,431 children were identified.
- The rate of the cases of childhood lead poisoning per 1,000 children tested decreased only 3%, from 4.3 in 2009 to 4.2 in 2010. This is a considerably slower rate of decline compared to an average annual decrease of 16% from 2005 to 2009.



Lead Poisoning Prevention Services

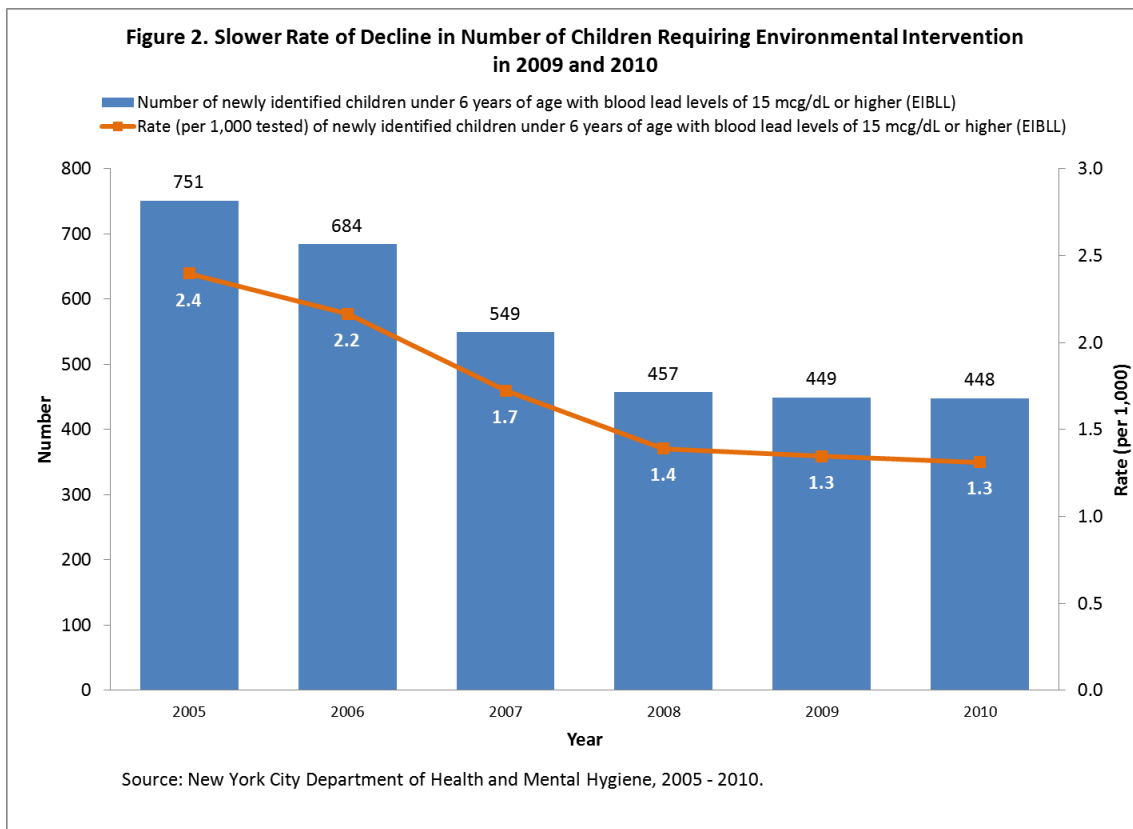
Recent research shows that even blood lead levels lower than 10 mcg/dL may cause adverse health effects. The DOHMH provides services for children with blood lead levels of 5 mcg/dL or higher. Letters are sent to families and medical providers of children with blood lead levels of 5-14 mcg/dL. These letters emphasize the importance of timely follow-up testing and suggest actions that parents can take to protect their children from exposure to lead. Educational materials are provided, including a brochure on tenant rights under Local Law 1 of 2004. Local Law 1 of 2004 requires building owners to inspect and safely repair lead-based paint hazards in pre-1960 multiple dwellings where a child under 6 years of age resides. If lead paint hazards are identified, the building owner is ordered to safely repair such hazards. If repairs are not made, tenants can call 311 for assistance from the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD).

Slower Rate of Decline in Number of Children Requiring Environmental Intervention

Under the NYC Health Code, the DOHMH provides environmental intervention and case coordination services for NYC children younger than 18 years of age with BLLs greater than or equal to the environmental intervention blood lead level (EIBLL). The EIBLL, currently defined as a blood lead level of 15 mcg/dL, triggers the environmental inspection in the child's home, assessment of potential environmental sources of lead exposure, and coordination with the child's health care provider.

In 2010,

- 448 children under 6 years of age were newly identified with blood lead levels of 15 mcg/dL almost the same number as in 2009 (449 children). The decline in the rate of children requiring environmental intervention has slowed down considerably – from an average annual decrease of 12% from 2005 to 2009, to a 0% from 2009 to 2010.



- In addition, 543 children under 3 years of age with blood lead levels of 10-14 mcg/dL received environmental intervention services under DOHMH’s pilot initiative funded by a grant from NYS Department of Health.

Section II: Blood Lead Testing

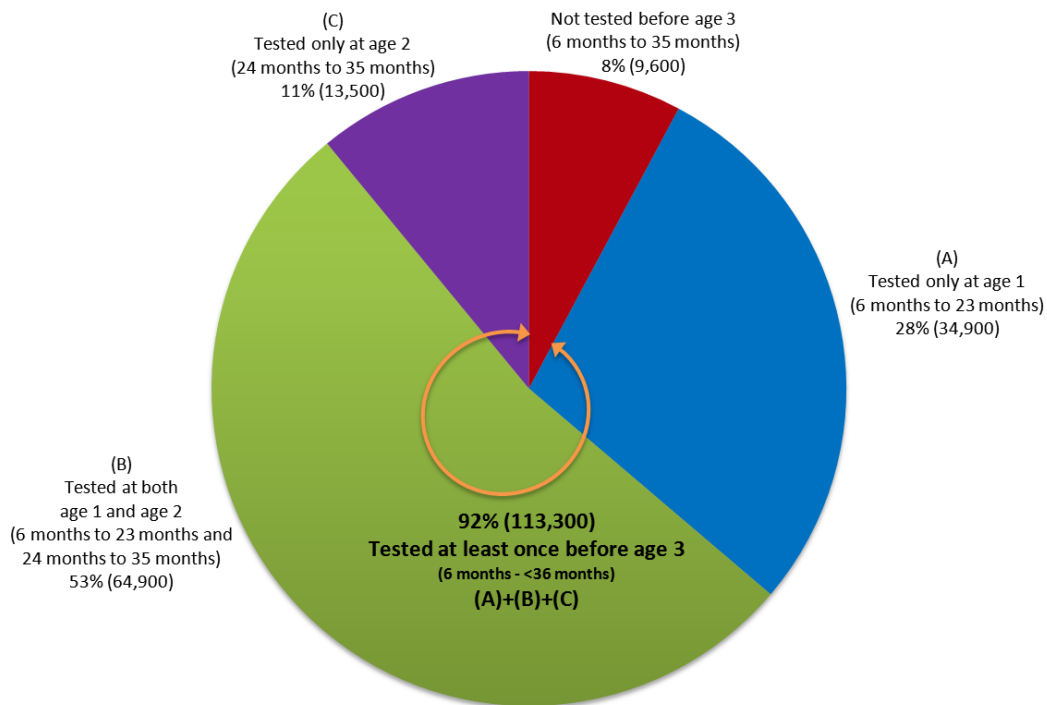
Early identification of lead-poisoned children is important in order to identify and prevent further exposures as quickly as possible. Since most children with elevated blood lead levels have no symptoms, blood lead testing is the only practical way to identify these children. In NYS, health care providers are required by law to test all children at or around age 1 and age 2, and to annually assess children for risk of lead poisoning starting at age 6 months to under 6 years of age.

Most Children Were Tested for Lead Poisoning At Least Once Before Age Three

In 2010,

- An estimated 92% of NYC children turning 3 years of age were tested for lead poisoning at least once. Yet, only about half (53%) of them were tested at or around both age 1 and age 2, as required by NYS law (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Most (92%) New York City Children are Tested for Lead Poisoning at Least Once Before Age Three.



Source: New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (Numerators), 2007-2010; New York State Department of Health Vital Records (Denominator), 2007.

Note: Numbers are rounded to the nearest hundred. Numerators were derived from the number of children turning 3 years of age in 2010 (born in 2007) tested for lead poisoning between ages 6 months and 35 months. Denominator - 122,900 children born in 2007 to New York City residents.

Strategies for Continued Progress

NYC has made great progress in reducing childhood lead poisoning. Continued success will require creative strategies and new partnerships which:

- Utilize surveillance data to identify high risk populations and target prevention efforts to those groups.
- Expand efforts to prevent childhood lead poisoning before it occurs.
- Eliminate or reduce lead-based paint hazards and other sources of lead in homes and communities.
- Promote blood lead testing for children, pregnant women and newborns through outreach to families, healthcare providers and Medicaid managed care organizations.
- Educate health care providers, families, and community organizations about preventing lead poisoning.
- Increase culturally and linguistically appropriate outreach to immigrant populations.
- Build partnerships with weatherization groups, community-based organizations, neighborhood housing groups, medical providers, and agencies concerned with child and environmental health.
- Promote other healthy homes issues including safe pest control, moisture and mold elimination, smoke and carbon monoxide alarms, and window guards.