



For Immediate Release

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Historic Lead Safe Certificate Law Takes Effect to Protect Kids from Lead Hazards in Their Homes

Trenton, NJ - Today, New Jersey's historic **Lead Safe Certificate law**, takes effect. The legislation passed into law last year requires a lead inspection for all rental properties built before 1978, closing a loophole that allowed rental units with fewer than 3 units to *ever be inspected* for lead hazards.

Lead is a dangerous neurotoxin that affects a child's learning, memory, and behavior as it damages the part of the brain that controls impulse. Dust from deteriorated lead-based paint found in older homes causes 75% of the lead poisoning cases in NJ each year, according to the NJ Department of Health.

Before today, thousands of kids were poisoned annually *before* lead was detected in a home. The new law will ensure that families know their home is lead-safe *before* they move in. "Today, New Jersey stops using our children as lead detectors," said Sean Jackson, Isles CEO. "Starting today, our State requires landlords to make certain the housing units they offer the public are lead safe."

In states and cities where similar policies have been implemented, childhood lead poisoning from lead-based paint has plummeted. In Rochester, for example, after requiring a lead safe certificate for all rental housing, lead poisoning of children dropped nearly 90% over 10 years. Maryland has reduced lead poisoning in Baltimore by 99%; Rhode Island and Massachusetts have had similar outcomes.

While the final program plans are still forthcoming from the Department of Community Affairs, a new code proposed as [N.J.A.C. 5:28A](#) was released this week. The public comment period ends September 16, 2022, but the law is still in effect starting today. *Lead Based Paint in Rental Dwellings Guidelines* and each municipality's inspection methodology are available on the [DCA website for chapter 182](#).

To ensure that lead hazards are removed in a timely fashion, the New Jersey Legislature recently voted for \$170M to remediate lead paint hazards as a part of the new State Budget that begins on July 1. The law allows up to \$150,000 per unit to be used for lead evaluation and lead hazard removal, but experience in cities like Rochester, which has had a similar law for over a decade indicates that average costs for rental units can be less than \$1,500. Using federal funds from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), this funding is a significant step towards ending childhood lead poisoning in New Jersey -- making all families "Lead-Safe @ Home". If done well, this initial investment in making all homes in NJ lead safe, will make a serious dent in the estimated 250,000 rental units in NJ with children under 6 living in them.

"This new funding provides a significant down payment towards ending childhood lead poisoning of New Jersey kids," said Ben Haygood, Isles Director of Policy.

The expectation from the community of housing and health advocates is that initial disbursements of this funding will be used to develop the infrastructure, build the lead workforce, provide public education around lead safety, and support municipalities in conducting much of the work to implement the bill.

Creating new infrastructure, like Lead and Healthy Homes Resource Centers, quickly training a robust workforce to properly remove lead hazards, and a streamlined system to qualify units and complete lead work are needed to make thousands of New Jersey's lead-burdened homes and apartments safe for children.

"We commend Governor Murphy and the Legislature for their commitment to solving the lead crisis. New Jersey is now among the nation's leaders' on making housing lead safe," said Jackson. Since we realize that creating a large, new statewide program is difficult, we also encourage the NJ DCA to seek advice from NJ stakeholders (community organizations, health experts, lead evaluators, landlords, residents) and other State's where these laws have already been implemented in order to create a thoughtful, efficient and effective program for lead hazard removal.

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SENATE BILL 1147

Lead based Paint Causes 75% of Childhood Lead Poisoning

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Lead in the *paint of NJ homes and apartments* causes the vast majority (70%-80%) of the more than **3,500 new childhood lead poisoning cases each year in New Jersey**. Between the years 2000 and 2015 over 225,000 children in New Jersey were identified with elevated blood lead levels.¹ As the lead paint deteriorates, lead *dust* spreads to floors, toys, counters, and window ledges, eventually making it to the mouths, lungs and brains of vulnerable children. Lead is a dangerous neurotoxin that affects a child's learning, memory, and even behavior, as it damages the part of the brain that controls impulse. Children with even low levels of lead are **six times more likely to enter the juvenile justice system, thirty percent more likely to fail 3rd grade reading and math, and seven times more likely to drop out of school.**² The NJ Department of the Public Advocate estimates future savings from avoiding lead exposures to be \$32,000 per child annually and \$27 billion statewide. Tragically, in 2015, 13 municipalities in New Jersey had a higher percentage of children with elevated blood lead levels than Flint, MI.³

We also know that, when sheltering in place (since the onset of Covid):

- Screening rates are down 40%
- There is a 27-29% uptick in children with an Elevated Blood Lead Level (EBLL)
- Hospitalizations for Lead poisoning are up (from 3 in 2019 to 11 in 2020)

One of the reasons that children continue to be poisoned by lead based paint, is that there is no statewide law that inspects the vast majority of our housing stock for lead. Currently, one- and two-family homes and apartments are not being inspected for lead at any time.

S1147 addresses these gaping loopholes in our policy to ensure that a family's home or apartment is safe from lead.

This bill requires a proactive inspection process for rental properties built before 1978, so that families can be sure their home is lead-safe before they move in and requires that landlords have an updated Lead Safe Certificate at rental turnover. Unless previously inspected, every single-family, two-family, and multiple rental dwelling will be inspected for lead-based paint hazards at rental turnover, or within two years of the effective date of the bill. Periodic follow-up inspections will be required as well. Seasonal rental units will be exempted.

Founded in 1981, Isles, Inc. is a community development and environmental organization based in Trenton, New Jersey. With a mission to foster self-reliant families and healthy, sustainable communities, we design and develop effective services that support this mission and share what we learn with others who can make a difference.

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¹ <https://toxicnj.com/why-does-lead-poisoning-still-afflict-tens-of-thousands-of-kids-in-nj-7dc4fae536a>

² https://economics.yale.edu/sites/default/files/aizer_feb_12_2015.pdf

³ https://www.nj.com/news/2016/02/11_cities_in_jersey_have_more_lead-affected_kids_t.html