



## ***For Immediate Release***

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### **State Funding Helps Ensure Everyone has Access to Healthy, Lead-Free Homes**

Governor Murphy and Lieutenant Governor Oliver recently announced the award of more than \$38 million in funding to nonprofits and local governments across the state through the Lead Remediation and Abatement Grant Program. Isles is one of 20 organizations throughout the state to receive funding to clean up homes and apartments where there is dangerous lead paint dust. This funding will allow Isles to expand the decades-long fight to remove lead-based paint hazards from Mercer County homes.

Many people are not aware that lead paint is so toxic and is present in most homes built before 1978. It is an invisible hazard that causes lowered IQ, cognitive delays, and behavioral problems, and is especially dangerous for young children and older adults. New funding from the state along with previously existing funding for lead remediation and abatement means that there is money available to fix this problem in your home – whether you own or rent. Isles provides Mercer County residents with a Healthy Homes Assessment, which tests homes for indoor health issues, like mold or asthma triggers, and for lead in the home’s paint or water.

For many low- and moderate-income people, grant money pays for structural repairs and lead remediation, up to \$13,000.

When a Mercer County resident reaches out for a Healthy Homes assessment, they often connect with Cherie Hooks, the Energy and Environmental Services Manager at Isles. Cherie is part of an Energy and Environmental Health team that fields requests ranging from broken boilers to leaky roofs and who are often out in the community, conducting Healthy Homes Assessments in people’s homes. While there, if the dwelling was built before 1978 (as most of the housing stock in Trenton was), Isles Community Health Workers also test for lead. Cherie was trained alongside the Community Health Workers, Lead Construction Managers and Lead Contractors through Isles’ Center for Energy and Environmental Training (CEET). When asked why this work is so important to her, Cherie said, “People just don’t know how much these issues could be impacting their health. They think that asthma runs in the family and rarely understand that it may be triggered by living and breathing in toxins in the home environment.”

Cherie recounted a story about an assessment she’d done a few years ago. When she arrived at the house, the homeowners proudly showed her how they’d remodeled to enclose their front porch and give their young children a nice place to play. They’d created a lovely, sunny spot filled with their

children's toys, and even placed a bowl of fruit on the table. As delightful as it looked, Cherie had been in enough homes that she was worried about what she saw.

When she asked the parents how often they opened the windows, they said that they liked to open them whenever the weather was nice so that the children could enjoy the fresh air. Normally, that would be a great answer, especially in Trenton where there aren't enough safe and inviting outdoor places to play. However, when she heard that, Cherie got chills.

She knows that lead paint was often used in older homes, especially the exterior. Chances are good that those homes were painted over year after year without ever stripping away the old lead paint. What that means is that whenever that paint gets worn or chipped, lead dust is released into the air. Every time the windows are opened, lead dust comes into the house. Lead paint is hidden under layers of paint on the window sashes, sills, door jambs and moldings. Over time, with normal wear and tear, lead dust ends up in the air, on all the surfaces, even coating that lovely bowl of fruit until someone takes a bite and ingests or inhales it.

When young children get screened for lead (recommended at age 1 and again at age 2), it's helpful to know that the CDC currently uses a blood lead reference value (BLRV) of 3.5 ug/dl to identify children with dangerous blood lead levels. However, there's no amount of lead that is safe to be exposed to. Even small amounts of lead can harm children. It is critically important that all children are screened for lead and that everyone living in a home built before 1978 has their home tested for lead-based paint.

Cherie is part of a larger team of trained specialists at Isles, a team that is currently growing as the demand for workers increases. Additionally, through CEET, Isles trains people interested in jobs in energy efficiency, lead hazard control, environmental health, and clean energy fields. As more government resources flow into "green" jobs, we need to train more workers.

Getting a healthy homes assessment is free for anyone living in Mercer County. In addition, low- and moderate-income people are eligible for money for weatherization and remediation whether they are tenants or homeowners. For more information and to schedule your assessment, or to find out more about training through CEET, visit [www.isles.org](http://www.isles.org)



Lead Hazard Control Specialist, Bennett Sims pointing out the difference between the previous framing around the door and the new door and windows that the Isles team replaced.