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How will the Federal Government Continue Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention?

April 16, 2025

Dear Senator Andy Kim,

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program staff were laid off on April 1, 2025, and conflicting headlines in the past several weeks have not made clear if critical lead poisoning tracking programs will continue in a reorganized agency.

Why did the US Department of Health and Human Services eliminate this essential program and how will the federal government prevent lead poisoning without these essential staff? It is estimated that New Jersey will receive \$730,000 in FY25 from the federal government to support childhood lead screening and environmental investigations¹ – can NJ still count on these funds?

Through your membership on the US Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions, we urge you to seek answers to these questions. We appreciate the committee's request for a hearing with Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. but are disappointed that the hearing has been delayed.

Lead is one of the most serious environmental neurotoxins and can have lifelong health consequences. Human exposure to lead is unsafe at any amount and has been linked to neurological damage and slowed development in children². Lead exposure is a racial and economic injustice, as lead poisoning in NJ disproportionately impacts children living in predominantly Black, Brown, and historically marginalized communities.

Childhood Lead Poisoning in New Jersey

- Every year, nearly 3,000 children in New Jersey are identified with a level of lead in their blood that is connected to poor educational outcomes³.
 - Next year, this number is expected to **double** because the threshold for elevated blood lead levels has been lowered based on CDC guidance.
 - Local health departments are required to provide support to all of these children and their families.
- Although we cannot put a price on the health of our children, there are high ongoing costs to the public of the current prevalence of lead poisoning in New Jersey.
 - An analysis of lead exposure impacts on children born in 2019 in NJ showed that the **cost to the state and municipalities would be \$383.8 million** for just that birth cohort over their lifetimes.

¹ <https://www.nj.gov/treasury/omb/publications/26budget/FY2026-Budget-Detail-Full.pdf>

² <https://www.cdc.gov/lead-prevention/symptoms-complications/index.html>

³ <https://www.nj.gov/health/childhood-lead/reports-data/>



- The total fiscal burden to private, state, local, and federal budgets is estimated at nearly \$3 billion due to reduced lifetime earnings, health care costs, institutional involvement, education impacts, social assistance spending, and premature mortality⁴.

We are writing on behalf of the Lead-Free NJ Steering Committee, Advocacy Coordinating Committee, and Health Committee. [Lead-Free NJ](#) is a state-wide collaborative that works to ensure that New Jersey's children are free from lead poisoning and that our environment is lead-safe. Like other members of Lead-Free NJ, we understand the significance of federal support for the success of childhood lead poisoning prevention.

Our questions are repeated here for your convenience: Why did the US Department of Health and Human Services eliminate this essential program and how will the federal government prevent lead poisoning without these essential staff? It is estimated that New Jersey will receive \$730,000 in FY25 from the federal government to support childhood lead screening and environmental investigations – can NJ still count on these funds?

Thank you,
Debbie Mans, Steering Committee Co-Chair
Yvette Jordan, Advocacy Coordinating Committee Co-Chair
Kelvin Boddy, Advocacy Coordinating Committee Co-Chair
Sheila Caldwell, Health Committee Co-Chair
Elyse Pivnick, Health Committee Co-Chair

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⁴ <https://valueofleadprevention.org/calculations.php?state=New%20Jersey>