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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week**

October 23-29, 2022 is National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week (NLPPW), which is a call to bring together individuals, organizations, industry, and government to increase lead poisoning prevention awareness in an effort to reduce childhood exposure to lead.

About 3.3 million American households, including 2.1 million low-income households that have children under six years of age, live in homes containing lead exposure hazards. According to the 2021 American Community Survey, approximately 74% (30,000) of housing units in Genesee and Orleans Counties were built before 1978 and may have lead exposure hazards.

“Childhood lead exposure is a significant issue in Genesee and Orleans Counties because of the large number of older homes that may contain lead-based paint, which is the main source of exposure in children,” stated Darren Brodie, Environmental Health Director of Genesee and Orleans County Health Departments (GO Health). “Lead is a toxic element that can cause damage to the brain and nervous system when it is absorbed into the body.”

Lead poisoning is preventable. The key is to stop children from coming into contact with lead hazards before poisoning occurs. Children can be exposed to lead by swallowing or breathing in lead dust created by old paint that has cracked and chipped, eating paint chips, or chewing on surfaces coated with lead-based paint such as windowsills. Lead exposure in children can cause learning and behavior problems, slow growth and development, and cause hearing and speech problems. These effects may be permanent and can continue into adulthood.

New York State requires health care providers to obtain a blood lead test for all children at age 1 and again at age 2. Health care providers are also required to assess all children ages 6 months to 6 years for risk of lead exposure. Below is a table that shows local screening rates among children in Genesee and Orleans Counties from 2021.

2021	Percentage of Children Tested at Age 1	Percentage of Children Tested at Age 2
Genesee County	58.21%	52.3%
Orleans County	60.52%	58.07%

We encourage parents and community members to educate themselves about the dangers of lead exposure by reviewing the three key themes of National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week:

**1. Get the Facts!**

- Any exposure to lead hazards can be serious, especially for children. The only safe blood lead level is zero!
- The most common source of lead exposure in children is through eating dust particles or paint chips so small that they may not be visible to the naked eye.
- The most common sources of lead in drinking water are lead pipes, faucets, and fixtures.
- Other sources of lead could include metal toys, wooden toys or furniture painted with lead-based paint, metal jewelry, lead-glazed pottery or porcelain, some candles, spices, and even make-up.

**2. Get your Home Tested!**

- Many homes built before 1978 have lead-based paint. If your home was built before 1978, you should get it tested for lead paint.
- If you rent, ask your landlord to have your home or apartment tested.
- Contact GO Health for more information on getting your home tested.

**3. Get your Child Tested!**

- Children’s blood lead levels tend to increase from 6 to 12 months of age and tend to peak at 18 to 24 months.
- A simple blood test is the only way to find out if your child has been poisoned by exposure to lead.

- Most children with detectable levels of lead in their blood have no obvious symptoms.
- Blood lead tests are also recommended for pregnant women who think they may have been exposed to lead.

“Please contact your health care provider and make it a priority get your child tested for lead,” stated Brodie. “Early detection is the key to preventing long-term health problems.”

In January 2019, the Genesee County Health Department received a \$1.3M federal grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to address lead-based paint hazards in homes and apartments in Genesee and Orleans counties. “This funding can be used specifically for lead-based paint repair activities as well as other health-related home repairs,” stated Gabrielle Lanich, Lead Program Coordinator for GO Health. “Eligible homeowners and property managers with qualified tenants may apply to receive these funds.” Contact the Genesee County Health Department for eligibility information.

For more information on the HUD program, other lead prevention programs, to obtain an application or to determine if your family and home fits the criteria, contact GO Health’s lead program staff at the Genesee County Health Department at 344-2580 ext.5555 or [Health.GOlead@co.genesee.ny.us](mailto:Health.GOlead@co.genesee.ny.us). You can also visit the GO Health website at [www.GOHealthNY.org](http://www.GOHealthNY.org). Program staff can quickly determine your initial eligibility, and will help to guide you through the application process.

To learn more about the New York State Lead Poisoning Prevention program, please [click here](#).

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