

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
September 30, 2013

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. This report is submitted in compliance with this requirement.

Data in the report are presented in two sections:

- *Section I* describes New York City'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 2012. New York State law requires testing of all children at or around age 1 and age 2. Consequently, before turning 3 years of age New York City children should be tested twice.

Important Definitions in This Report

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

Lead poisoning is defined by the New York City Health Code as a blood lead level of 10 mcg/dL or greater.

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

¹ In 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
Continued Decline in Number of Children with Lead Poisoning in New York City

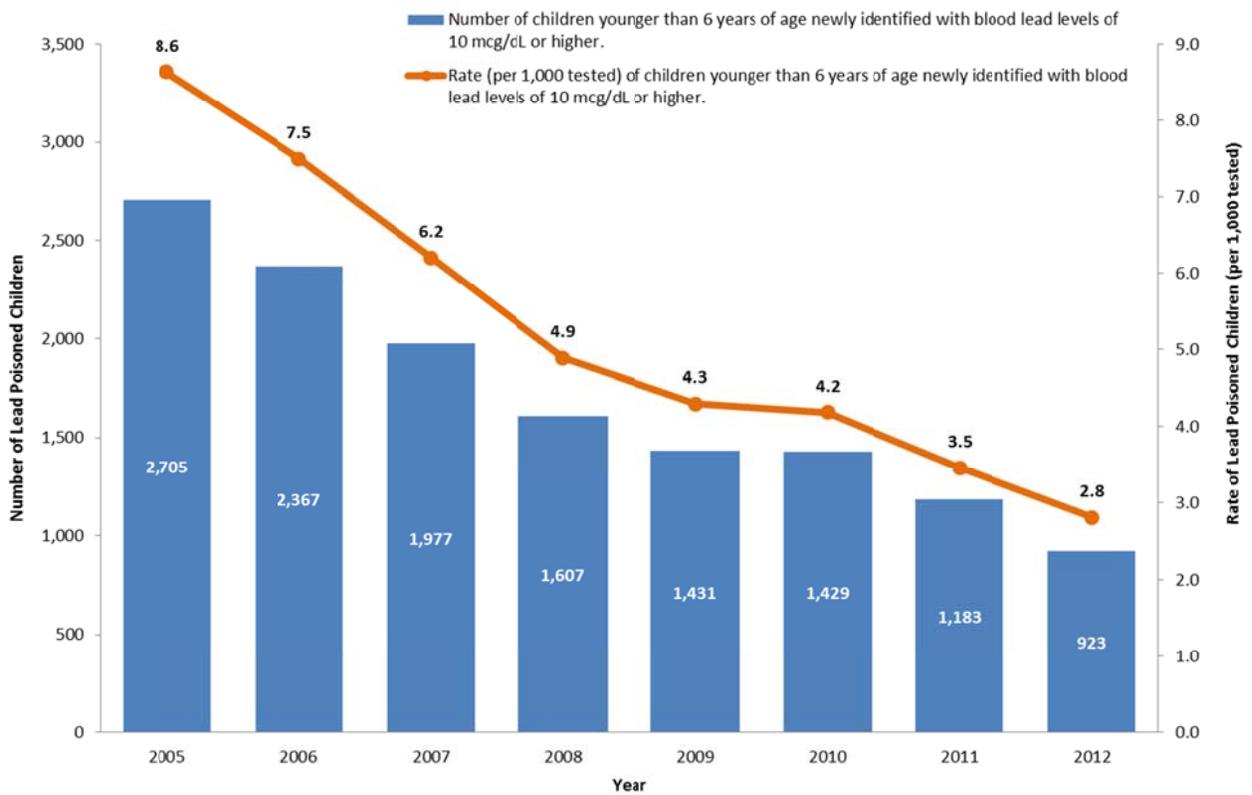
Childhood lead poisoning is a preventable public health problem. Over the last several decades, New York City has made significant progress in reducing childhood lead poisoning. There has been a steady decline in the overall number and rate of children with lead poisoning, and there are fewer children requiring environmental intervention for lead poisoning.

Fewer Lead Poisoned Children

In 2012,

- 923 New York City children under 6 years of age were newly identified with blood lead levels of 10 mcg/dL or higher, a 22% decline compared to 2011, when the total was 1,183.
- The rate of the cases of childhood lead poisoning per 1,000 children tested decreased by 19%, from 3.5 in 2011 to 2.8 in 2012.

Figure 1. Continued Decline in Number of Children with Lead Poisoning



Source: New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Childhood Blood Lead Registry, 2005 - 2012.

Fewer Children with Blood Lead Levels at or above the National Reference Level

In 2012, there were 8,179 New York City children younger than six years of age newly identified with blood lead levels of 5 mcg/dL or greater, which is the reference level set by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This represents a 12% decline from 2011 when there were 9,352 children with a blood lead level greater or equal to the CDC reference level. A blood lead level at or above the reference level indicates that a child has blood lead level higher than most other children. DOHMH sends letters 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.

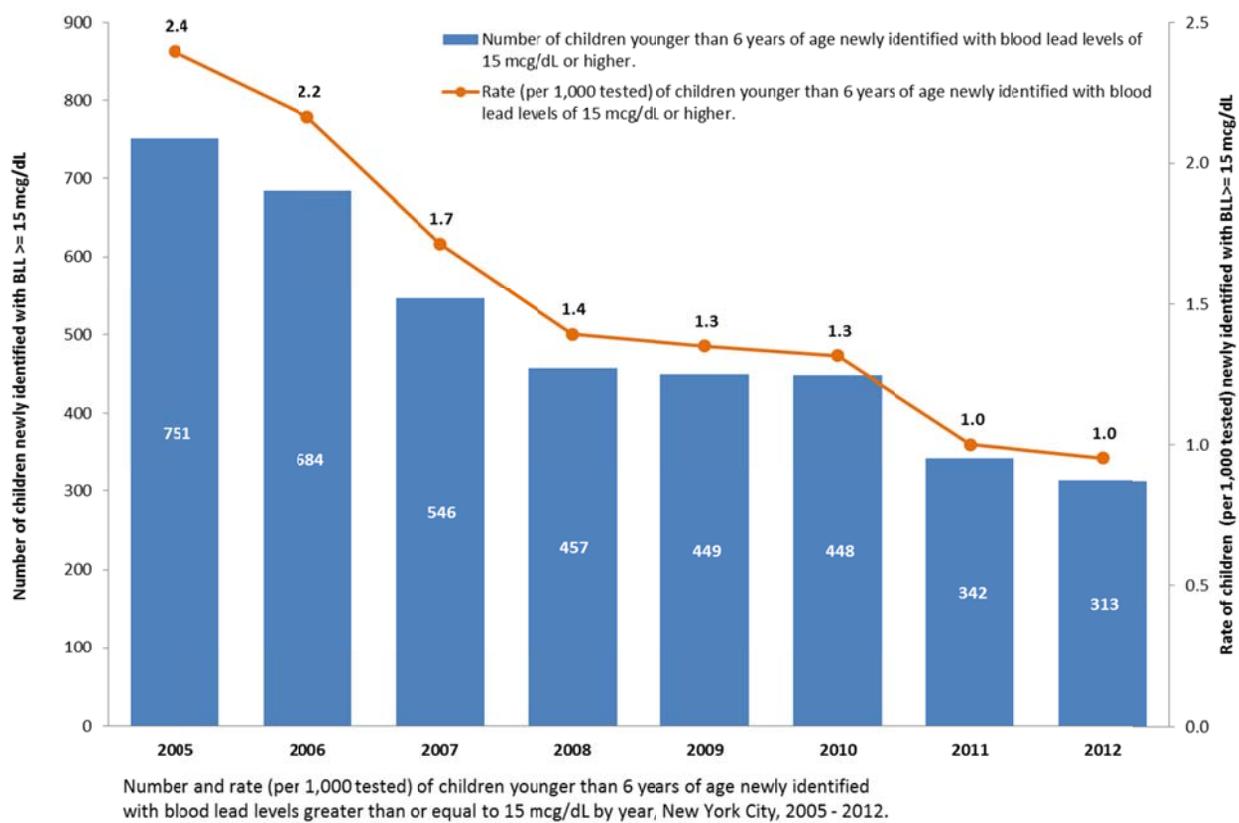
Fewer Children Requiring Environmental Intervention

Under the New York City Health Code, the DOHMH provides environmental intervention and case coordination services for New York City children younger than 18 years of age with blood lead levels 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 2012,

- 349 children younger than 18 years of age were newly identified with blood lead levels of 15 mcg/dL or higher. Of these children,
- 313 were younger than 6 years of age, the age group at greatest risk. This is an 8% decline compared to 2011 when there were 342 children younger than 6 years of age newly identified with blood lead levels of 15 mcg/dL or higher.

Figure 2. Fewer Children Required Environmental Interventions



- In addition, 479 children under 6 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 New York State Department of Health.

Section II: Blood Lead Testing

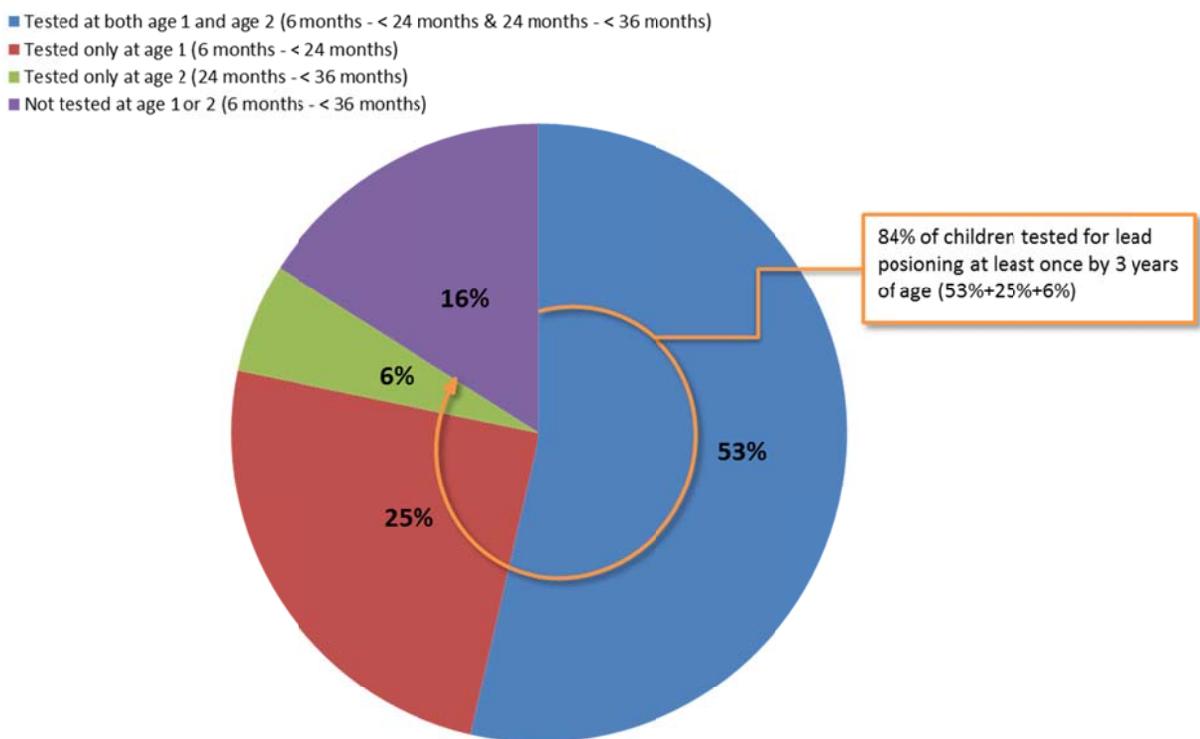
Early identification of lead-poisoned children is important in order to identify and prevent further exposures as quickly as possible. Since most children with elevated blood lead levels have no symptoms, blood lead testing is the only practical way to identify these children. In New York State, health 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 2012,

- An estimated 84% of New York City 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 New York State law (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Most (84%) New York City Children are Tested for Lead Poisoning at Least Once Before Their Third Year of Life



Percent of children born in 2009 tested for lead poisoning by age at test, New York City, 2012.
 Sources: NYC DOHMH LPPP and NYC DOHMH Office of Vital Statistics. Denominators were derived from the number of children born in New York City in 2009. Children born in 2009 from Vital Records were matched to children in Lead Registry born in 2009 and tested between ages 6 months and 35 months. Numerators were derived from matched records.

Strategies for Continued Progress

New York City has made great progress in reducing childhood lead poisoning and continues to engage health care providers, families, and community organizations to implement and promote prevention strategies. These strategies include:

- Utilize surveillance data to identify high risk populations and target prevention efforts to those groups.
- Continue efforts to prevent childhood lead poisoning, especially among the city's most vulnerable children.
- 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.
- Build partnerships with neighborhood housing groups, community-based organizations, home visiting programs, medical providers, and agencies concerned with child and environmental health.
- Integrate healthy homes activities, such as reduction of home asthma triggers and safety hazards, into lead poisoning prevention efforts.

