

National League of Cities: Culture of Health Spotlight
Detroit, Michigan: *City of Detroit Health Officer on Protecting Residents from Lead*

Detroit is harnessing a wide array of city agencies to combat lead exposure and give its most vulnerable residents access to healthy housing. Health Officer and Director of the Detroit Health Department Dr. Joneigh S. Khaldun lays out to NLC how the City is applying its research and resources to address the problem. Working across agencies, the Health Department is leading efforts to conduct outreach and testing, minimize lead dust exposure during demolitions, assess lead in foreclosed buildings and provide residents with a path to home ownership, and ensure that the water stays on. For example, the Health Department is partnering with the Housing and Revitalization Department to channel lead abatement resources to the city's most vulnerable populations. This work is supported by the Mayor and City Council's modifications of the City of Detroit Lead Ordinance to prevent landlords from collecting rent on uninspected properties that might contain lead. More information can be found on the Lead Safe Detroit website at <http://www.detroitmi.gov/leadsafe>.

How did you make housing and health a priority in Detroit?

Launch of the City-wide Lead Safe Website: As the Health Officer and Director of the Detroit Health Department (DHD), I have made it a point to elevate the importance and awareness of health and housing since the beginning of my tenure. I launched the Lead Safe Detroit website which describes activities and resources led by governmental and non-governmental agencies in the city of Detroit around lead poisoning. The website which is housed on the City's main website serves as a resource to city residents and partner agencies doing work around lead prevention, health, and housing. The website can be found at: <http://www.detroitmi.gov/leadsafe>

Partner Across City Agencies – Primary Prevention Lead Project: In 2018, with the support of multiple city agencies and community partners, the Detroit Health Department has secured an additional \$1.25 million in city funding to perform outreach, education, home lead testing, and testing of children for lead exposure across the city.

Protect from Lead Exposure – Health and Demolition Project: The Health Department serves as the lead advisor to inform the demolition process through the provision of research and the application of best practices to minimize the exposure of lead dust during demolitions.

Engage Families with Resources – Partnership with the Detroit Land Bank: Through the Emergency Solutions Grant, the Detroit Health Department conducts door to door assessments with residents living in foreclosed housing in an effort to provide resources to move them on the path of homeownership. Our department applies holistic approaches where we offer Healthy Homes Assessments and resources, provide lead testing, and link families to community resources.

Ensure Essential Services to Households – Partnership with the Water Department: We continue to offer strategies to assist families with keeping their water on and/or linking them to resources that helps them better manage their water bill.

Combine Resources for Targeted Abatement – Partnership with the Housing and Revitalization Department (HRD): DHD and HRD continue to partner and combine resources to address lead-based paint hazards inside Detroit’s single-family housing stock. It is estimated that 93% of the city’s housing stock was built before 1978, so DHD and HRD work together to make sure grant funding for lead-based paint abatement programs go to the most vulnerable populations in the city. HRD continues to work with DHD to identify additional funding that targets lead-based paint hazard abatement.

What was the impetus for recent efforts to coordinate Healthy Housing Efforts across municipal departments, and not just the health department?

The leadership of the Health Department strongly believes that improved communication, coordination, and sharing of best practices is the best way to yield a positive collective impact around health and housing in the City of Detroit.

What are some critical success factors in bringing this to fruition?

Willingness and readiness of City Departments and non-governmental agencies to combine resources and prioritize this issue in a visible and timely manner.

How has the mayor been supportive to efforts?

The Mayor and City Council have championed efforts to modify the City of Detroit Lead Ordinance to enact regulations that stop landlords from collecting rent on properties without a Certificate of Compliance, which includes a lead inspection and mitigation of lead hazards. The city is currently rolling out a robust policy enforcement strategy that includes education to landlords and tenants that are impacted the most by the regulations changes and provide a pathway to assist landlords to becoming compliant as well as protecting tenants in the rent withhold process.

The Mayor has also provided additional funds to launch the City of Detroit Lead Outreach Strategy led by the City’s Health Department. The Mayor’s Office has dedicated staff to support City Departments with fundraising for resources to address health and housing issues.

What are some of the opportunities and challenges ahead?

The greatest opportunity is to robustly increase the awareness of lead hazards among the community, and to provide resources so that people can identify and mitigate these

hazards. We are excited about the culmination of these multi-agency efforts. While we are thrilled at these newly available resources, they are still limited so we will continue to seek ways to expand our efforts.

What are the outcomes you are striving for from these efforts?

1. Increase number of persons who receive education and information about lead prevention over the next year;
2. Increased lead testing rates among children less than 6 years old and pregnant women over the next year;
3. Increased number of properties abated in high risk zip codes in the City of Detroit;
4. Number of families who achieved home ownership as a result of our effort through the Emergency Solutions Grant.