



Robert P. Astorino, Westchester County Executive

NEWS RELEASE

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TODAY'S LESSON: AVOID LEAD **County Health Department teaches at-risk children how to avoid lead poisoning**

Second-graders at Museum School 25 in Yonkers got a lunchtime lesson about the dangers of lead paint today. Beth Lorenzen, an EPA-certified Risk Assessor / Lead Based Paint Professional from the Westchester County Department of Health's Lead Primary Prevention Program used music and a video to engage the children and get her message across.

The health department chose this school because it is in the 10701 zip code area of Yonkers, in the program's target area, which includes sections of Yonkers, White Plains New Rochelle and Mount Vernon. These areas were chosen because they had a significant concentration of children identified with elevated blood lead levels. Residents who live in the 10701, 10705, 10606, 10801 or 10550 zip codes can call the Health Department, at 813-5000 and request a free assessment of their homes or apartments.

"Lead poisoning can cause learning problems, mental retardation, seizures and in severe cases, death," said Acting Health Commissioner Patsy Yang. "That's why it's so important to teach children how to avoid lead poisoning in the first place."

"Prevention also saves taxpayers' money," said County Executive Robert P. Astorino. "We estimate that our home visits and outreach save thousands of dollars for every child who avoids a costly hospitalization and specialized treatment."

In most cases, the sources of contamination are lead hazards in the home, such as peeling and chipping lead paint and lead paint dust, which children breathe, lick or swallow.

Lead paint was banned for residential use in 1978, but is still found in a majority of the county's older housing stock. Lead and lead paint also can be found in imported toys, jewelry, candy and make-up, and in some pottery.

The Health Department's Lead Primary Prevention Program began as a pilot program funded by the New York's State's Center for Environmental Health in late 2007. So far, through this program, the insides of 58 homes and the exteriors of 29 have been identified as having lead hazards, and those hazards have been remediated. In addition, 142 children identified through these home assessments were referred for blood lead level testing.

Homeowners should eliminate potential lead paint hazards, such as chipping and peeling paint on doors or windows that can create lead dust. Through the program, a training course will be offered on February 26th for homeowners, landlords and maintenance workers to learn how to make renovations while minimizing lead dust from lead-based paint. For information or to register for the Lead Safe Work Practices Training Course, call 231-2538. The class will be held at the Westchester County Department of Emergency Services, Richard A. Flynn Training Center, 4 Dana Road in Valhalla.

To evaluate lead paint hazards in your home, you can also hire an EPA-certified evaluator. Information on lead safe work practices and a listing of Region 2 certified abatement and evaluation firms is available from the Health Department or by accessing its website at www.westchestergov.com/health. Rental tenants who have chipping and peeling paint can contact their local Building Department and file a housing complaint.

The Primary Prevention Program is an expansion of the Health Department's ongoing efforts to provide nursing and environmental case management of children identified as being lead poisoned. Any parent who suspects a child has been exposed to lead should consult with their primary care physician and have the child tested. For more information on lead poisoning prevention, please contact the Westchester County Department of Health at (914) 813-5000 or access www.westchestergov.com/health