



Lead Advisory Committee and Healthy Homes Outreach Task Force

Quarterly Meeting Summary

May 12, 2020

Summary

On Tuesday, May 12, forty-four lead and healthy homes professionals met via Zoom for the quarterly NC Lead and Healthy Homes Outreach Task Force meeting. During the first half of the meeting, participants shared updates on their lead and healthy homes work in their respective agencies, and during the second half they shared feedback on ways to address their work during the COVID-19 crisis. Research Associate, Megan Rodgers, in the UNC IE Center for Public Engagement with Science coordinates meetings of the task force. This meeting was supported by funding from the NC DHHS Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program (NC CLPPP) and the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences.

Megan Rodgers opened the meeting with a virtual poll to ask how much of the participants' work time is being spent responding to the COVID-19 crisis. Most responded that they are working 25% or less of their work time on the COVID-19 crisis.

Local and State Updates since February 2020

General feedback: Several meeting participants noted that their local health departments are waiting for some guidelines on lead investigation procedures during the COVID-19 crisis from the state. Most of the following reports were shared in the order below.

Gina Uresti, Greensboro Housing Coalition: The agency is continuing to do research on virtual assessments, answering phone calls and give information to clients, to accommodate the remote interaction with clients. They are also trying to do rental assistance for some. The new GHC executive director is Josie Williams.

Neisha Reynolds, City of Durham: She is the new director of the city's HUD-funded Lead and Healthy Homes program: She is beginning to get notifications out to multiple properties that qualify for the remediation efforts. That paperwork will be advertised in the next 2 weeks.

Doris Hogan, Forsyth County Health Department: They are completing routine paperwork, getting clients to complete required paperwork for their reporting, and seeking ways to do some of their typical tasks related to childhood lead poisoning prevention. **Question from Doris:** *Should health departments collect samples from new private schools under plan reviews?* **Follow-up from Tashaunda Hill:** *Is this an ideal time to collect sampling since CDC sites are closed?*

Dan Richter, Duke University: Soil researcher who is starting a new stakeholder discussion group of people to get feedback on his lead in soil research. He recently gave a presentation of his lead/soil mapping work in Durham (covering 25 miles in Durham), titled "Understanding & Controlling Urban Soil Lead Contamination & Its Impact on Public Health." After getting consent from 60 residents, he found that lead concentrations in soil are decreasing over time, but there are lead "hot spots" throughout the city. He bought a new XRF and paint adapter to it and offered for anyone who wants to test lead with it; it works in 20 seconds with extreme accuracy.

Elizabeth Ellmore, Alamance County Health Department: Staff is currently waiting for state's guidance on proceeding with work during the COVID-19 crisis.



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James Gormley, US HUD, Greensboro field office: The field office has had some recent leadership transitions; he is familiarizing himself with and starting to engage with NC's HUD grantees. He will provide support to HUD's lead hazard support team.

Jill Hutchinson, Davidson County Health Department: Staff is currently waiting on a lead clearance.

Krishnaveni Balakrishnan, Orange County Health Department: There are currently no home visits being conducted, and most of her projects are related to COVID-19 response efforts, including providing technical assistance to families through Zoom meetings and phone calls.

Lorisa Seibel, Reinvestment Partners: The agency is still conducting some home visits for children exposed to lead. One case is involving an electronics recycling facility called GEEP in SE Durham, and she asked for any advice; Ed briefly talked about the battery manufacturing issue that occurred in Forsyth County a few years ago and suggested that OSHA should be involved; the child has a confirmed BLL above 5 µg/dL.

Neasha Graves, UNC Institute for the Environment: **1)** UNC IE staff is working to understand environmental health outreach and other needs related to lead, asthma, and healthy homes during the COVID-19 crisis. **2)** She reviewed several online trainings that are already posted on the NC Healthy Homes website, including 3 modules on lead, asthma and extreme heat/health and the archived March 4 clinical lead training. <http://nchealthyhomes.com/resources/> **3)** The team will likely be conducting some virtual live trainings in the coming weeks and months. **4)** UNC IE has worked with regional staff to revise Wilson County Health Department's interim controls fact sheet; it is appropriate for dissemination to parents following a child's blood lead test and prior to being able to conduct lead investigations (appropriate for current virtual/remote work with families). https://nchealthyhomes.com/files/2020/05/Short-term-Actions-to-Prevent-Exposure-to-Lead_English.pdf
https://nchealthyhomes.com/files/2020/05/Short-term-Actions-to-Prevent-Exposure-to-Lead_Spanish.pdf

Nykesse Roberts, Mecklenburg County Health Department: Her program is seeking ideas from other programs on ways to conduct lead inspections. She has 2 pending lead investigations; she has spoken with parents and provided initial steps for protecting their children.

Marian Robertson, Wilson County Health Department (EH division): Her program currently has one CLPPP case and one EBL case of a pregnant woman. They have been speaking with families regularly and passing along information.

Rob Pearsall, NC DHHS Children's Environmental Health: He is currently addressing ongoing cases and trying to get educational resources to families involved in new EBL cases.

Robert Hunt, NC DHHS Children's Environmental Health: (serves north central region) He has some cases waiting for investigations; it appears that local health departments in his region are giving written and verbal information to families; he is doing some following up on lead cases. The NC DHHS CEH is working on protocols for using PPE to get into homes



Sofia Mosquera-Rodriguez, UNC Greensboro, Center for Housing and Community Studies: Much of her work involves mapping and door-to-door outreach, but the program's in-person canvassing and outreach has had to stop until they find a way to do it safely during the COVID-19 crisis. The program has conducted some rapid response work on food and rental assistance through small community grants.

Stacy Robbins, NC DHHS Children's Environmental Health: She is catching up on paperwork and writing reports of lead investigations. She and colleagues are restructuring their training activities to be virtual, and she is working on guidelines for local health departments with NC DHHS colleague Rob Pearsall.

Tena Hand, NC DHHS Children's Environmental Health: Pregnant women module in NC LEAD is up and running so that entries regarding investigations and other interventions can be entered into the surveillance system. Due to several process questions from the meeting participants (including the work flow for addressing pregnant women and how pregnant women with EBLs are identified), it was discussed that the NC DHHS Children's Environmental Health Unit's surveillance team may work with UNC IE to host a webinar on how to use the system to enter data on pregnant women. ***Note:** Tena sent an email to Quest Diagnostics, LabCorp, and Mayo asking if they have a pregnancy/prenatal indicator for blood lead test orders.

Barbara Donadio, Duke Primary Children's Clinic: – The lab that they work with has an arrangement to automatically forward blood lead test results of pregnant women to the state. She also mentioned that disorganization with testing results may exist because OBGYN practices do not know what they can do with testing and results; this is the first time many of them will be testing pregnant women.

Theresa Stenersen, NC Child Care Health and Safety Resource Center: She is a nurse consultant and liaison for child care health consultants throughout the state. Nearly all her time is current spent responding to needs around COVID-19. Her colleagues in the Resource Center are writing the guidance for child care facilities during the COVID-19 crisis.

Tashaunda Hill, Pitt County Health Department: **1)** The program has 2 EBL cases waiting for investigations; they are supporting these families with information and support over the phone. **2)** She was recently contacted about an unconfirmed case, in which a parent works in CBD manufacturing; she would be interested in getting more info on this exposure risk. **3)** Pitt County will implement annual monitoring to catch up on work with child occupied facilities.

Vikki Crouse, NC Child: **1)** She leads the environmental health work at NC Child; the agency launched the Lead Free NC website (<https://leadfreenc.org/>) as the new home for its lead-free campaign and for its new lead mapping tool. Some work was contributed by the Duke Environmental Law and Policy Clinic; the site has a feature encouraging parents to get involved in lead-free advocacy work; she is currently collecting feedback on the site during this soft launch. **2)** NC Child's 3-year grant for lead work was just renewed.

Ed Norman, NC DHHS Children's Environmental Health: **1)** Due to the CDC's work on COVID-19, there was an adjustment in the competitive funding among state childhood lead poisoning prevention programs; instead of 5-year competitive proposal, all state CLPPPs will receive a one-year extension of existing funding; this funding will allow him to permanently hire a new epidemiologist. **2)** Under the NC DHHS's EPA WIIN grant (used to test water in licensed child care centers), the state has a contract with RTI to coordinate the testing; sampling will begin



when quality assurance plans are approved. RTI was ready to enroll CC centers but it will have to wait until at least June, since many centers are closed. RTI will send out enrollment email to CC centers who will be open in June. There is hope that they can use some flexibility in deadlines for testing because of the COVID-19 crisis. Ed hopes to have the testing done by October 2021. DPH will apply for another year of EPA funding. There is a current RFA published for a new EPA WIIN grant for mitigation with one part of the RFA targeting child care centers and schools; it is very competitive. **Theresa Stenersen** asked Ed to let the NC Child Care Health and Safety Resource Center know which centers RTI is sending the initial emails to, so that they can be of assistance in the outreach to child care centers.

[Discussion on Addressing Lead/Healthy Homes during the COVID-19 Crisis](#)

Megan Rodgers opened the floor for feedback on ways that participants are adjusting their work on lead and healthy homes, as well as challenges and shared ideas. Notes in this section of the meeting have been organized by discussion questions and topics.

Key questions and topics:

1. **How are programs accommodating clients and patients' needs around lead and healthy homes during the COVID-19 crisis?**
2. **What are some barriers in continuing your work?**
3. **What needs do you have (and which ones are being met) regarding lead, asthma and healthy homes outreach?**
4. **Resources (shared throughout the discussion)**

Barbara Donadio: Clinic is addressing treatment of kids with COVID symptoms; the clinic has become a respiratory screening center for the county of Durham; there is a screening tent outside the clinic. They are doing a lot of education with parents on preventing COVID and treating symptoms. Scaling back on non-COVID related issues. Guidelines for treating kids change daily.

Gina Uresti: People want them to be able to get into the homes to give them assistance. Virtual opportunities depend upon what the client can accommodate. Right now, they are getting normal procedural documents signed by clients; trying to have just one client in the office at a time. They are getting some face masks for themselves and clients so that they can continue some services.

Amanda Woodard: The clinic's biggest challenge is getting children in for testing, with parents rescheduling or canceling appointments out of fear; the pediatric clinic has altered hours but has remained open since the COVID-19 crisis started.

Barbara Donadio: Agreed that parents are scared to let people into their homes. It's a challenge to convince them to still come out. Still continuing to be creative with reaching out to families and limit face to face contact.



Krishnaveni Balakrishnan: The health department is trying to make sure materials and resources accommodate social determinants of health, especially if families live in homes that already have HH problems. They have a COVID-19 e-newsletter that she puts together, and they send it out to different agencies and families. Some EH staff have been going out to stores/businesses/churches to distribute educational materials. Some churches have a call log and they will call senior citizens to let them know about some of the materials and get resources out to them.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE): Donna Gilbird said Alan Huneycutt (in the NC DHHS Children's Environmental Health Unit) has been working with Emergency Operation Center to get sufficient PPE. The staff is also working on a questionnaire that people can ask before going into homes.

Home Assessments/Investigations: Nykesse Roberts asked how some home assessments are being conducted. Doris Hogan said they plan to do an emergency investigation soon, and they hope to do a lot of the work outside the home (in the yard). They will be using shoe covers, N95, and spray boxes and other materials that may be in the home. **Question from Doris:** *Can we require families to wear masks during the investigations? There was some exchange about ideas regarding home visits.*

Kimly Blount: The NC DHHS Children's Environmental Health Unit is working on policies and procedures and because they are not safety experts, they are making requests for PPE. They cannot get it because they aren't deemed Tier 1 (most essential) staff. So now they are working with the DHHS Safety Office to get a clearer idea of what PPE is needed and can be provided to public health professionals throughout the state. Robert Pearsall is a regional EH specialist who is assisting with this process. Since some home lead investigations can take about 2-4 hours in length and require touching nearly everything in a home, they are trying to come up with safety measures. She asked meeting participants what some counties already have in place. She is getting some general comments from counties, but not enough detail in her interactions with local health departments.

Nykesse Roberts: The Mecklenburg County HD staff have not conducted home investigations. They get emails daily/weekly and their supervisor is still trying to figure out what to do. They really are stuck because social distancing is not possible in very small homes.

Kimly Blount: Education is key, especially finding some way to provide information virtually and conducting virtual home walkthroughs.

Additional points about PPE and procedures in home settings:

- **Lorisa Seibel: Question:** *Which N-95 masks and/or surgical masks are recommended? Does anyone have a reliable source for N-95 masks?*
- **Shineka Small:** Cumberland County staff was instructed to wear face coverings.
- **Doris Hogan:** Her new case for this week seems to be occupational and that they won't be in the home that long. The home is 800 square feet; they are planning to wear N95 and to use sanitizer wipes, gloves, and foot coverings.
- **Barbara Donadio:** If parties are engaged with each other, they should both wear masks.



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- **Lorisa Seibel:** Her agency is using sanitizer, gloves, and masks; they are trying to do most questions outside. They send the consent form using an adobe software, to make it easy for getting signatures during social distancing. (**link to software below in resources section**; DocuSign and DocMagic are other e-signing tools) Lorisa is fearful of families not seeking resources.
- **Donna Gilbird:** The NC DHHS Children's Environmental Health unit is working on a questionnaire for counties to make PPE requests.

Barbara Donadio: Agencies and practices must find ways to make sure we're not getting it or spreading it. There's more fear of being in homes than in offices.

Lorisa Seibel: Question: *With the uncertainty about reopening trainings during the crisis, will professionals be able to get their lead refresher courses online? Ed said that Greenville Tech has submitted a course that would meet most of our concerns. Question:* *Is it possible to get a larger venue for the August refresher course? Ed's staff at NC DHHS is exploring the venue options now.*

Jeff Smedley: Question: *Are field staff issued respirators for any occupational exposures? The NC DHHS Children's Environmental Health field staff has not been issued respirators. Their team doesn't conduct the industrial inspections. Regional EH specialist Alan Huneycutt has been researching questions and options around fittings for N95 and other related PPE issues. Some requirements have been relaxed, but they are addressing it with the safety officer in NC DHHS. Ed said they have the capacity to address the fitting for N95 and other equipment because of the asbestos work in the NC DHHS Health Hazards Control Unit. The NC DHHS safety office has regional locations throughout the state to help with fitting, etc.*

Resources

Throughout this discussion, participants shared these resources. They range in topics, including advice for professionals and lay audiences, information on PPE, and instructional webinars.

Neasha Graves:

- UNC IE is developing a resources page on COVID-19 and healthy homes; Megan Rodgers will post it on the NC Healthy Homes website when it is complete.
- Reminder about the adapted lead interim controls fact sheet:
https://nchealthyhomes.com/files/2020/05/Short-term-Actions-to-Prevent-Exposure-to-Lead_English.pdf
https://nchealthyhomes.com/files/2020/05/Short-term-Actions-to-Prevent-Exposure-to-Lead_Spanish.pdf

Stephanie Fisher: Dr. Gerri Mattson (NC DHHS pediatric medical consultant) gives weekly webinars to help dealing with families and COVID-19; she is going to conduct it throughout May. They cover the 211 calls; they use the CDC information during their calls, and the talks have led to very rich conversations with local health departments. Link to archived webinars: <http://childreneyouth.chproviderresources.sgizmo.com/s3>



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Jeff Smedley: Resources on PPE were shared when questions about steps for sanitizing face masks were asked:

- <https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/information/health-care/requesting-ppe>
- <https://files.nc.gov/ncdhhs/documents/files/covid-19/Classification-of-North-Carolina-Issued-Personal-Protective-Equipment-PPE.pdf>

Theresa Stenersen:

- There is also a screening form developed for child care that may be helpful to use: <https://files.nc.gov/ncdhhs/documents/files/COVID-19/NC-Interim-Guidance-for-Child-Care-Settings.pdf>
- Guidance that the NC Child Care Health and Safety Resource Center created for Cloth Face Coverings in child care: <https://healthychildcare.unc.edu/2020/04/using-cloth-face-coverings-safely/>
- Many distilleries are now "brewing" hand sanitizer throughout the state!

Attendees

Krishnaveni Balakrishnan	Senior Public Health Educator, Healthy Communities-Healthy Homes Coordinator	Orange County Health Department	kbalakrishnan@orangecountync.gov
Brenda Bass	Environmental Health Regional Specialist	Children's Environmental Health, NC DHHS	brenda.bass@dhhs.nc.gov
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Barbara Donadio	Pediatric Nurse Clinician	Duke Children's Primary Care	barbara.donadio@duke.edu
Elizabeth Ellmore	REHS	Alamance County Environmental Health	Elizabeth.Ellmore@alamance-nc.com
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Donna Gilbird	Environmental Health Regional Specialist	Children's Environmental Health, NC DHHS	Donna.Gilbird@dhhs.nc.gov
Charly Gilfoil	Medical Legal Partnership Program	Legal Aid of North Carolina	CharlyG@legalaidnc.org



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Nykesse Roberts	REHS, Senior Environmental Specialist	Mecklenburg County Environmental Health	Nykesse.Roberts@mecklenburgcountync.gov
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