



## Summary

On Tuesday, May 11, forty lead and healthy homes professionals met via Zoom for the quarterly NC Lead and Healthy Homes Outreach Task Force meeting. Prior to the meeting, members were asked to submit their program updates on lead and healthy homes activities in an online survey, responses included below. Public Science and Internship Coordinator, 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.

## Local, State, and Federal Updates (submitted prior to meeting)

### **Chatham County Public Health Department – Anne Lowry, Nellie Benitez, and Elizabeth Fridley**

- Chatham Co CLPPP provided multiple presentations to pre-k teachers in Chatham Co Schools, our Latinx community childcare centers, and a Kaleidoscope play group about health effects and sources of lead.
- Provided lead information at several community hub events about lead in pre-1978 homes.
- Conducted two monitoring visits, both of which failed visual inspection as well as sampling. Working with owners/tenants on more permanent remediation/abatement solutions.
- Preparing to present to the Chatham County Alliance on childhood lead poisoning prevention, as part of their role in lead grant with UNC and NCDHHS to coordinate meetings to educate community partners about lead focusing primarily in the Siler City area. They have conducted a lot of presentations at child care centers. They are seeking repair/remediation funds for a couple of homes badly in need of repair.

### **City of Charlotte – Hanna Kirlin**

- The City's Lead Program continues to move forward and accept applications even though we are struggling to find both general and lead abatement contractors. We have lots of home repairs and lead abatement work, but availability of contractors is our limiting factor.
- **[New project/initiative]:** Starting up the **Asthma Housing Program** again with community stakeholders like **Atrium and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools**. This program will help address asthma triggers in the homes like dust, allergens, pet dander, and mold found in carpet, HVAC systems, old windows, etc. and will be screened for lead as well. They will work with nurses to get referrals; want to repair 5 homes in the fiscal year (up to \$15,000 per home); will use licensed contractors to make repairs. Hanna's program will also be screening for Social Determinants of Health via a questionnaire for all participants enrolled in our housing programs to collect, track, and analyze baseline data (ER visits, hospitalizations, etc.) to help determine impact of the City's programs and assist clients by connecting them to additional resources.

### **City of Wilmington – R.B. Gardner**

- The City's HUD LBPHC grant funded Lead Hazard Reduction/Healthy Homes Program status is Partially Active. Anticipate that with continued loosening of state and local COVID-19 restrictions and mandates, we should be Fully Active July/August 2021.

### **Cumberland County Department of Public Health – Shineka Small**

- We will be participating in a Virtual Teen Summit to discuss Healthy Homes and resources we provide.



**Forsyth County Department of Public Health – Doris Hogan**

- Conducted 1 investigation for 5-7ug/dL no lead paint/dust, toys with some lead; 2 investigations for 8-19ug/dL, one occupational exposure, other possible toys; 1 investigation for >20ug/dL, no hazards found.
- Conducted 2 Maintenance Standard visits. Will resume some lead outreach to parents after July 1.

**NC Child – Vikki Crouse**

- Legislative advocacy: Our team is currently working with partners on HB 272, a bill that would lower the health standard for lead in children’s drinking water to 10 ppb from 15 ppb. The change would extend exposure protection to 30,000 young children in child care centers in particular. The bill has bipartisan support and no opposition. It was passed favorably out of the House Environment Committee this week and heads to the Health Committee next. NC Child will plan to share an action alert with the Healthy Homes group once the bill heads to the house floor for a vote.
- Lead Safe Housing Registry: Our team continues to work with environmental health partners to build a statewide lead safe housing registry of homes. We plan to launch the pilot during National Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Week this year.
- Lead levels among pregnant women: NC Child is currently studying the status of prenatal lead prevention efforts in NC and working to identify ways to strengthen the system of screenings/testing among women enrolled in Medicaid, those who are uninsured, and women who receive their care at private practices.

**NC DHHS, NC Adult Blood Lead Epidemiology and Surveillance Program (ABLES) – Kim Gaetz**

- We are conducting a mass mailing of lead poisoning prevention materials to all women of childbearing age with an elevated blood lead level of 5 ug/dL or greater in the next 6 months. This mailing will include a letter educating them on the availability of prenatal blood lead testing if they become pregnant.

**NC Housing Finance Agency – Donna Coleman**

- In February 2021, NCHFA awarded 33 counties access to funding through the Essential Single-Family Rehabilitation Loan Pool for low income housing with designations of \$190,000 to begin and access to an additional funding pool for total awards of \$8m.
  - Note: These funds are secured, forgivable loans of up to \$30k (more if there is lead or other toxins to remediate/abate) to low-income (80% AMI or less) homeowners and homes with children under the age of 6 is one of the special needs categories which can be used to access repairs.
  - The child does not need to have been tested for lead, only live in a home with potential lead hazards and be under 6.
- In April 2021, NCHFA awarded 37 projects under the Urgent Repair Program for a total of \$4.5m in funding; these smaller-per-unit funds would normally be accessed for a very low income (<50%) home with a child who has been tested for lead as they are meant to be used for life threatening situations.
- The NCHFA Board also approved \$2.5m for the Displacement Prevention Program working with NC DHHS focused on accessibility modifications at the April meeting.
- This is the year that the state's NC Consolidated (CON) Plan for HUD is updated for the next five years; this year, NCHFA added lead and other environmental toxins as a focus issue to the plan. While NCHFA has included environmental toxins prior to this CON Plan, we felt it was time to include our efforts directly in this more public format.



#### Reinvestment Partners – Lorisa Seibel

- Outreach in a public housing community identified Lead Based Paint Hazards that we are addressing with the Durham Housing Authority.
- **[New project/initiative]:** Reinvestment Partners and PEACH are collaborating on a funding proposal for a pilot **Asthma Healthy Homes program** to address environmental asthma triggers in homes in Durham. If they demonstrate feasibility, the program may be one of the Medicaid Healthy Opportunities Pilots (HOPs). They will address 12 homes with asthma patients and want to use this model across the state. They will get referrals from Duke doctors, and they must have a housing and health professional going into the homes. ***This report fostered encouragement from*** Donna Coleman to push physicians to give more formal prescriptions/requests for home assessments and repairs for their asthma patients. She also encouraged this effort among members of the Asthma Alliance of NC.

#### UNC Institute for the Environment – Neasha Graves

- UNC IE assisted NC DHHS in planning and submitting its funding proposal for the statewide childhood lead poisoning prevention program (which also funds the Task Force work, listserv and web-based resources).
- February 22-26, UNC-IE staff recorded session titled An Overview of Emerging Healthy Homes Issues was featured in the 2021 Virtual Conference on Lead and Healthy Housing Issues. The conference was coordinated by the Lead and Environmental Hazards Association, and our session is now featured/viewed among the archived sessions, now at no cost to viewers.
- UNC IE is offering virtual live lead workshops for child care professionals and public health professionals. We will accommodate evening workshop options for child care professionals, and we will provide certificates of completion. Please notify Neasha Graves ([neasha\\_graves@unc.edu](mailto:neasha_graves@unc.edu)) if you're interested in a workshop for your organization.

#### Group Discussion

##### Ed Norman: Update on CDC and EPA WIIN grants

- His team submitted the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program (CLPPP) grant to the CDC, which included the typical submission involving surveillance/data collection (this was called Component A in the NOFO). However, there was an additional Component B involving a focus on specific high-risk regions, which included a rural eastern NC area in the proposal (Edgecombe, Nash, Lenoir, Robeson to start with), and that (if funded) UNC will lead the work with the Lenoir/Robeson County Health Departments and the NC Environmental Justice Network.
- RTI has tested more than 62% of licensed CC centers in the state, for lead in the water. A little over 2% are coming back above EPA standard. Almost 9% have had at least one faucet above the level. Ed anticipates getting additional money (more than \$500K) to test at smaller, residential facilities and possibly some school systems. The initiative is still missing mitigation funds, which has been problematic. NC Office of State Budget and Management (OSBM) is looking at an opportunity to use the federal COVID relief funding to aid in testing/repairing water sources in schools. **Jennifer Redmon (Research Triangle Institute, RTI)** reported that almost 2,800 centers have been tested, and her team is hoping to test the rest of them by 6/30/21. They have their funding until the end of September. Some have water has been tested in pre-K programs in schools. They are focusing on ways to provide advice around mitigation. Some have been able to deal with it with filters and other lower cost solutions. Few centers continue to still



have high lead levels after implementing mitigation steps. David reminded everyone to go to the Clean Water for Carolina Kids (<https://www.cleanwaterforcarolinakids.org/>) site for resources.

**Lorisa Seibel: Inquired about NC DHHS Children's Environmental Health staff's capacity to address lead referrals from doctors who are concerned about children's exposure to lead (for example, BBLs of 4).**

- She gets some referrals that seem to be at 4 µg/dL. Can regional specialists advise people on what to do when the BBLs are that low? David suggested that she send people to the regional specialist covering the county from which people are calling.

**Lorisa Seibel: Inquired about climate change increasing moisture, rain and flooding that causes moisture problems in homes that affects people's health?**

- Neasha Graves mentioned how they're exploring opportunities, particularly through the work they do in the UNC Center for Environmental Health and Susceptibility to address housing resilience following climate events. One example (for a few years) has been their establishment of the NC Disaster: EH Resources web page (<https://ie.unc.edu/cpes/disaster-response-recovery/>).
- Ed said the staff in the NC DHHS Children's Environmental Health has limited action, except for the occasional opportunity to address related healthy homes issues.

**Neasha Graves: How well are programs making the transition back into home visits/inspections since the initial shutdowns in 2020 over COVID?**

- Rob Pearsall: The regional EH specialists use the protocol specifically designed for them. Recently, they received new supplies, so that they could use tables to set up everything outside, including pre-inspection preparation and for a decontamination area after the inspection. They use disinfectants on equipment before putting it back in their cars. They have acquired more personal protective equipment (PPE). They ask COVID screening questions before setting up a time to conduct the visit. The protocol makes communication a little more difficult, especially because families stay in different rooms during investigation, and everyone is wearing masks during the investigation.
- Lakieta Sanders: Has been asked to test children in a local child care center, because the center has had high levels of lead in the water. She wanted advice on how to proceed with safety protocols, because this will be her first outing to test children since spring 2020.
- Tonya Zimmerman provided some information on safety protocols.

**Guest Presentations**

**Lead Hazards Reduction / Healthy Homes Program LBPHC Grant Status: Lessons Learned and Way Forward**

*R. B. Gardner, City of Wilmington, Lead Hazard Grant Coordinator*

**New OLHCHH Rules, Education Programs and Grant Opportunities**

*Jonnette Simmons, Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes, HUD*



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### Helpful Links

- Financing Options for Your Community (NCHFA): <https://www.nchfa.com/homeownership-partners/community-partners/discover-financing-options-your-community>
- Asthma Assessment Resources: <https://sph.unc.edu/cehs/asthma-assessment-resources/>
- Environmental Health Directory: <https://ehs.ncpublichealth.com/docs/EHS-Directory.pdf>
- Healthy Homes Assessment Training for BPI Certification: <https://hhp.bpi.org/portal/hhp/>
  - Kevin Kennedy, [kkennedy@cmh.edu](mailto:kkennedy@cmh.edu)
- The NC ABLES program has a new poster on [preventing lead exposure at shooting ranges](#), thanks to Jordan Jernigan, Wake County's Lead Program.

### Attendees

Brenda Bass	Environmental Health Regional Specialist	Children's Environmental Health, NC DHHS	<a href="mailto:brenda.bass@dhhs.nc.gov">brenda.bass@dhhs.nc.gov</a>
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