



Child Lead Exposure Elimination Commission

2023 Annual Report

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Letter from the Chair

Home should be a place of refuge and safety, but sadly, for many Michigan children. Home is often a place where they can be exposed to dangerous amounts of lead. Many of Michigan's homes were built before 1978, when the federal government prohibited the use of lead in paint. That often makes homes built before 1978 a possible source of lead contamination. There is no safe level of lead exposure. However, we know that childhood lead exposure is preventable. The keys to preventing lead poisoning are to stop children from encountering lead and provide care to those who have been exposed.

This report provides both an update on Michigan's progress in preventing and managing childhood lead exposure, as well as a reflection on the advancements Michigan's Child Lead Exposure Elimination Commission (CLEEC) has achieved in the last year. The CLEEC is committed to policy changes that ensure every child lives a lead-free life.

This report also looks to the future. We should recognize and celebrate how much progress has been made in removing sources of lead exposure for children. We must also recognize that there is still work to be done, and the CLEEC is focused on addressing the highest risks of lead exposures remaining for our children.

I am grateful to the members of the CLEEC for their time, expertise, and tireless efforts to protect Michigan's children from lead exposure in 2023 and beyond.

Respectfully yours,

Natasha Bagdasarian, MD, MPH, FIDSA, FACP
Chair
Chief Medical Executive
Michigan Department of Health and Human Services

CLEEC Priorities Update: 2023

In 2023, the Child Lead Exposure Elimination Commission (CLEEC) met four times to share updates on child lead poisoning prevention actions in the state and discuss strategies for promoting priorities established during a strategic planning session in late 2022. Minutes are available on the [CLEEC website](#).

Data

Data innovations: Since its inception, one priority for the CLEEC has been the availability of high-quality, integrated blood lead surveillance and program activity data. Two notable innovations were accomplished in 2023 that contribute to this priority.

- Integration of lead services and nurse case management for children with elevated blood lead levels: All lead inspections and lead home abatement activities have been tracked in the Michigan Comprehensive Lead Exposure and Abatement Registry (MiCLEAR). Nurse case management services for children with elevated blood lead levels have been tracked in the Healthy Homes and Lead Poisoning Surveillance System (HHPSS). However, there was no connection between the two, and HHPSS had many limitations. In 2023, a replacement for HHPSS that is integrated into MiCLEAR went live after a multi-year development process. This integration has improved the functionality of the nurse case management module and allowed for integration of home lead inspection and abatement activities data with data on children with elevated blood lead levels.
- MI Lead Dashboard: In 2023, the [MiLead Dashboard](#) went live. This dashboard was designed to provide critical, at-a-glance information for different geographies about blood lead levels, efforts to reduce lead exposure in Michigan children, and factors that may lead to an increased risk of lead exposure. Data included in the dashboard are organized into four categories related to lead exposure: Blood Lead Testing Results, Nursing Case Management Services, Lead Abatement Services, and Community Demographics and Risk Factors.

Blood lead and lead services data: Beginning with the third meeting in 2023, the CLEEC received updates on blood lead and housing intervention data at each subsequent meeting. The following is a summary of the data for 2023.

Childhood blood lead testing data:

A blood lead test can reveal if a person has had recent or ongoing exposure to lead. A blood lead test cannot tell whether there were exposures in the distant past. Blood lead testing is particularly important for young children and pregnant persons. Exposure to lead early in life has been shown to cause problems with neurological development, learning, behavior, hearing, and growth. Clinical laboratories are required to report all tests for lead in blood to MDHHS, and MDHHS manages the reports in a surveillance database.

Figure 1 shows the number and percent of children under age 6 tested for lead in blood each year from 2012 through 2023. The peak in 2016 reflects the impact of the Flint water crisis on public

concerns about lead exposure in Flint and throughout the state. The sharp drop in the numbers tested in 2020 reflects the impact of COVID on the frequency of well-child medical visits. Testing has gradually increased since then, but as of 2023, was still below pre-pandemic levels.

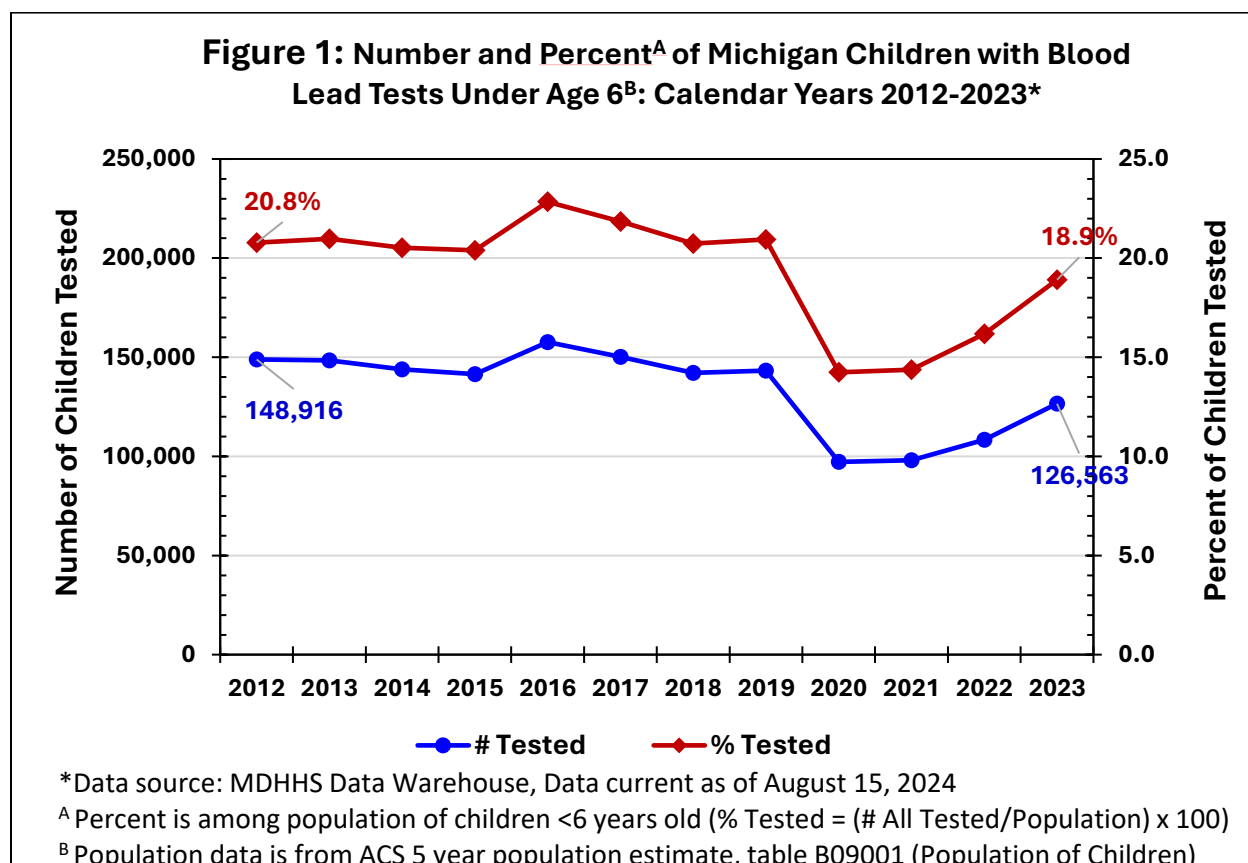
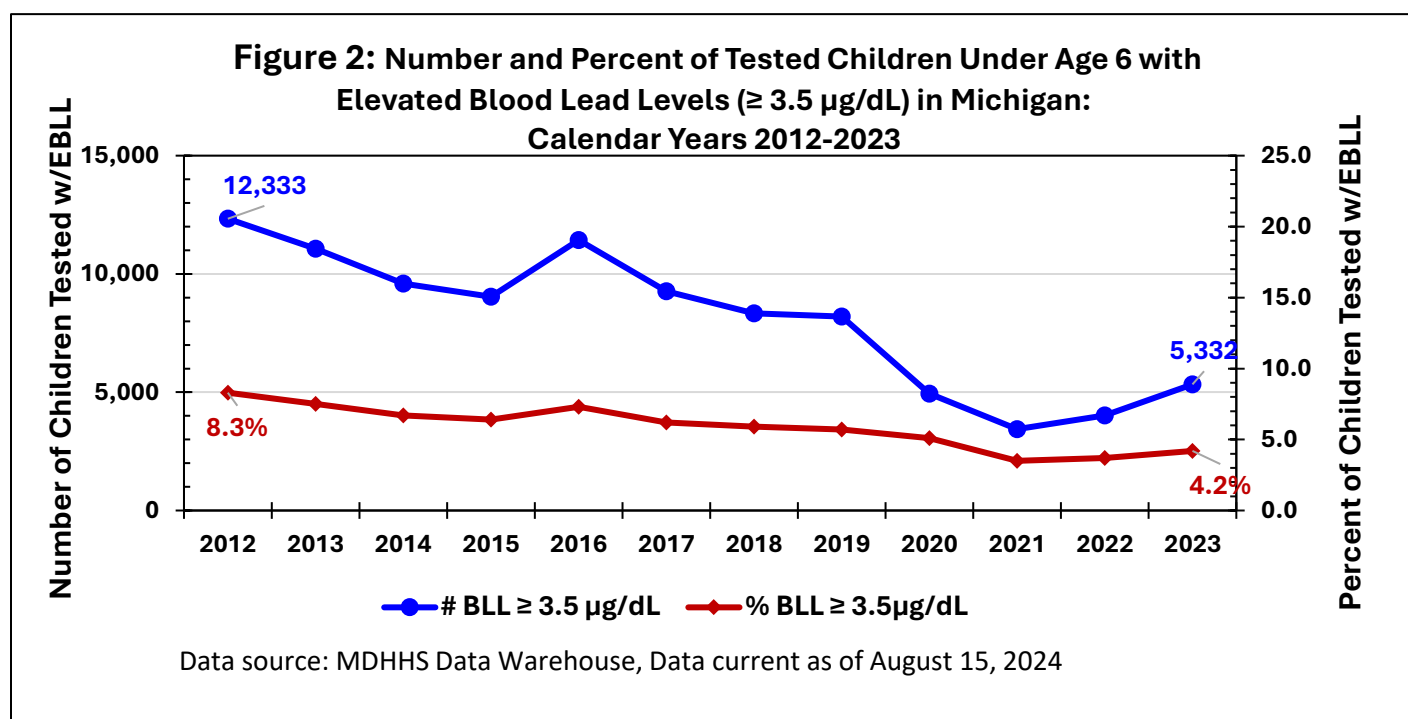


Figure 2 shows the number and percent of children under age 6 with elevated blood lead levels (EBLLs) each year from 2012 through 2023. EBLL is defined as a blood lead level of 3.5 micrograms per deciliter (µg/dL) or greater. Each child was counted once per year based on the highest venous blood lead level. If no venous test was available, the highest capillary level was used if tested more than once. The number and percentage of children with EBLLs has generally declined steadily since 2012, consistent with overall national trends. However, the peak in 2016 reflected increased testing of at-risk children following the Flint water crisis. The large drop in 2020 was related to the overall drop in testing because of COVID. Notably, although testing rebounded in 2023, the percentage of children with EBLLs in 2023 was still below pre-pandemic percentages.



Statewide lead services data:

Michigan is committed to protecting the public from lead exposure by working together with families and local communities to reduce or eliminate all sources of lead in the home. MDHHS's Lead Safe Home Program (LSHP) helps families identify and remove lead hazards from homes across the state. Eligibility for the program is determined based on the submission of an application, Medicaid or household income status, and the location of the home. In addition, MDHHS's Lead Services Section (LSS) oversees the Community Development (CD) program, which provides Medicaid grant funds, technical assistance and oversight to lead hazard control services to local communities. The purpose of this program is to expand lead hazard control in Michigan through community development. In 2022, the Legislature provided funding to create the Lead Poisoning Prevention Fund (Lead Fund). The Lead Fund helps to fill a critical gap for homeowners and income-property owners who do not qualify for free home lead services from the LSS.

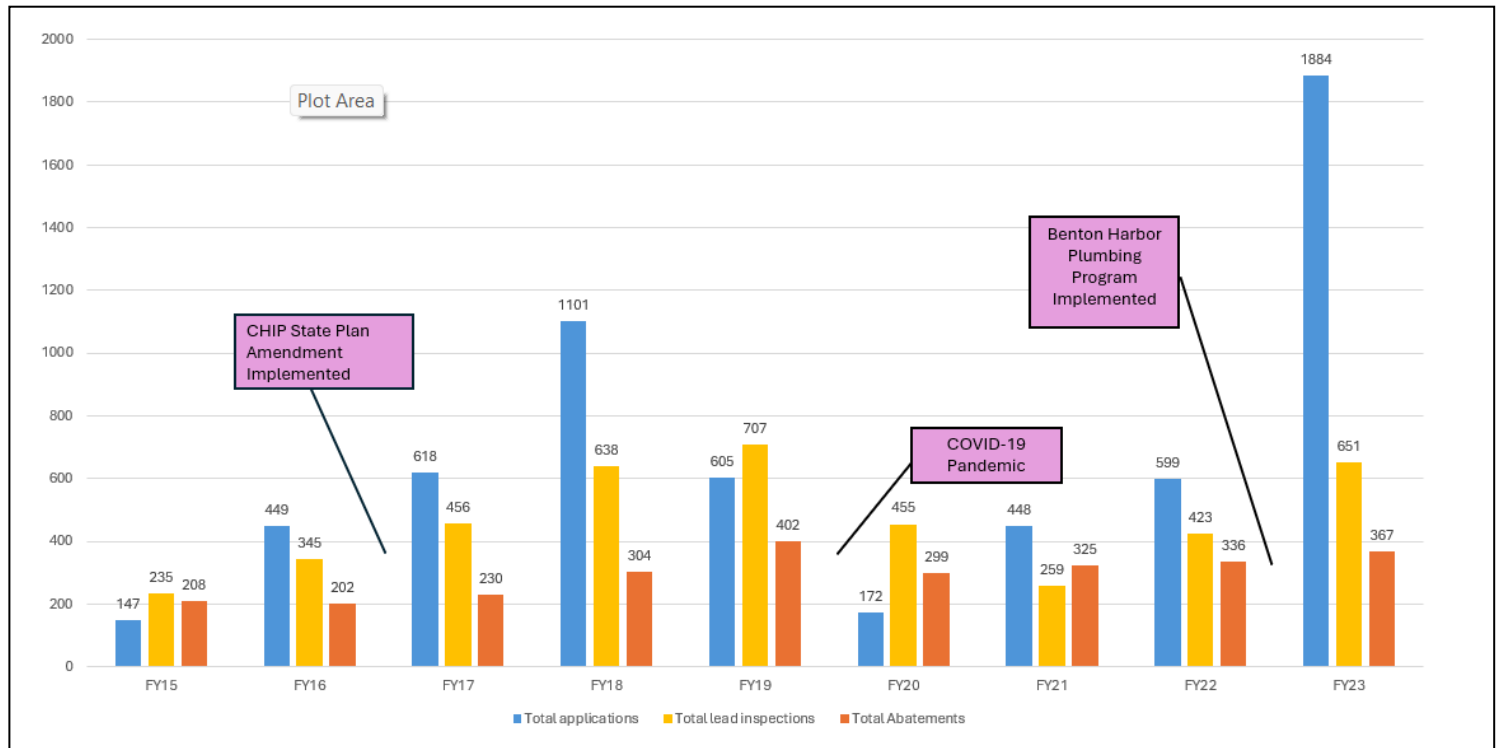
Figure 3 highlights the LSS activities from fiscal year (FY)* 2015 through FY23. It indicates the number of applications received and approved by the LSS programs for assistance in abating homes each fiscal year starting in FY15. Like blood lead testing, number of applications declined with COVID but has since rebounded to the highest level ever in FY23. A large percentage of the applications in FY23 were related to the [Benton Harbor water efforts](#).

Figure 3 also shows the number of home inspections and abatements from FY15 through FY23. The increases in lead inspections and home abatements started in FY17 due to the use of Medicaid

* Fiscal year is October – September.

funds for home lead abatement services, approved by Medicaid through a process called [CHIP State Plan Amendment](#). Like blood lead testing, lead inspection and abatement activities declined during COVID but have since been gradually increasing.

Figure 3: Numbers of Lead Services Applications, Lead Inspections, Lead Home Abatements:



FY15-FY23

CLEEC Strategic Priorities Update: 2023

Three strategic priorities were identified in a planning session in 2022. They are described below, along with progress made in 2023 and challenges faced.

Priority: Mandate universal blood lead testing at 1 and 2 years of age and additional testing if a child is in a high-risk community.

- Universal blood lead testing of young children became law in 2023. In October 2023, the governor signed into law ([MCL 333.5474d](#)) the requirement that physicians test, or order a test, for lead in blood in children at ages one and two and other ages depending on risk factors including living in a high-risk community identified by MDHHS in administrative rules.
- The law goes into effect when the rules are promulgated. MDHHS provided draft rules to the public and the CLEEC for comment in 2024 and expects the rules to be promulgated in 2025. MDHHS has developed outreach materials so that physicians and the public are aware of the law and the detailed requirements in the rules. Those materials will be rolled out when requirements go into effect.

Priority: Require a lead inspection and risk assessment (LIRA) before the transfer or leasing of a pre-1978 home, including water testing.

- A bill was introduced in 2021 ([House Bill 5419 of 2021](#)) requiring lead-based paint inspections before the sale or transfer of certain real property but was not voted on and was not reintroduced in any subsequent legislative session.
- Some realtors, homebuilders, and rental property groups have expressed opposition to such a requirement.
- It is common to require lead-based paint inspections as part of due diligence in commercial, multifamily, and demolition or renovation of older buildings. Several other states have requirements like this proposed requirement.

Priority:

(a) Local: Require a rental certification program that includes a lead inspection/risk assessment (LIRA) in high-risk housing until the housing is deemed to be lead-safe.

- Rental registrations and inspections are a local function in Michigan. Rental certification programs exist in only some communities, and those that do exist vary widely.
- Any state-wide mandate for local units to inspect properties will need to be fully funded per the Headlee Amendment.

(b) State: Adopt a consistent state-wide housing code enforcement model that addresses exposure from lead-based paint.

- The Michigan housing law ([MCL 125.401-543](#)) describes minimum requirements for the maintenance, alteration, health, safety, and improvements of dwellings in jurisdictions that have a population of 10,000 or more. It does not address lead hazards.
- Local jurisdictions develop and enforce housing ordinances based on the minimum requirements in the state law and may be more stringent than minimum state requirements. Several local jurisdictions have adopted ordinances for lead inspections

and remediations but have faced resource, policy, and legal challenges.

(c) State: Bring EPA's Renovation, Repair and Painting Rule (RRP) to Michigan to administer.

- House Bill 4532 of 2023 ([House Bill 4532 of 2023](#)) amends Part 54A (Lead Abatement) of the Public Health Code to change requirements related to lead abatement and mitigation for certain activities. This ensures that state law codifies the requirements of the EPA's RRP. It was introduced in 2023, passed by the House, and referred to the Senate Government Operations Committee.

CLEEC Future Strategic Priorities and Initiatives

Strategic priorities: The CLEEC is pleased that one of its three 2023 priorities, the mandate for universal blood lead testing, was accomplished. However, the other two priorities, which require legislative action to succeed, will continue to pose challenges. Supporting the CLEEC, specifically through mobilizing lead stakeholders and advocates, will be essential to moving these priorities forward.

Initiatives:

- In 2023, the CLEEC worked on developing a policy statement focused on the future of reducing lead exposure in Michigan's children, titled [A Statement from the Michigan Child Lead Exposure Elimination Commission: A Necessary Focus on Lead Paint and Dust in Housing to Achieve Lead Exposure Elimination Goals](#). The statement was finalized in 2024 and published on the [CLEEC's website](#).
- In late 2023, the CDC and FDA reported high blood lead levels in children associated with consumption of lead-contaminated cinnamon-containing applesauce products. The CLEEC has since explored the policy and programmatic impacts of detecting and prohibiting lead-contaminated products, noting the gaps and confusion in existing policies, programs, and requirements.