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PARENTS ENCOURAGED TO TEST YOUNG CHILDREN FOR LEAD POISONING AND TO BE AWARE OF POSSIBLE HOME EXPOSURES

NATIONAL LEAD POISONING PREVENTION WEEK IS OCTOBER 20-26

HARTFORD - The Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) today is reminding Connecticut residents to test young children for lead levels in their blood and be aware of possible exposure to lead poisoning in the home. October 20-26 is National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week (NLPPW) – a federal initiative sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). NLPPW is dedicated to actions that address health effects of lead exposure and increase awareness of childhood lead poisoning prevention. Lead poisoning is preventable despite the presence of lead in homes and the environment.

“It is critical to know the facts about lead paint, learn if there is lead in your home by testing various surfaces, and speaking to your medical provider about testing your young child,” said Allison Sullivan, Supervising Environmental Analyst of DPH’s Lead Poisoning Prevention and Radon Program. “Major sources of lead exposure to children include lead-based paint and lead-contaminated dust in older buildings.”

Each year in Connecticut over 1,600 children test positive for elevated blood lead levels or lead poisoning. According to the CDC, nearly half a million children living in the United States have elevated blood lead levels that may cause significant damage to their development and overall health. In addition to paint and dust, children can also be exposed to lead from exposures at a workplace and from lead in soil.

Lead paint has been banned for use in house paints in the United States since 1978. Increased awareness of the risk of lead poisoning, mandatory childhood screening and primary prevention efforts have helped decrease the rate of lead poisoned children in Connecticut over the past fifteen years. Despite these gains, Connecticut’s housing stock is among the oldest in the

country, and many houses still contain lead paint hazards that have the potential to poison children. This is particularly true for lower income families, many of whom live in urban communities. DPH data show that Black and Hispanic children in Connecticut are at greater risk for lead poisoning, and many efforts are being made to address this disparity. For everyone living in a home or apartment built before 1978, it is important to understand the steps that should be taken to protect children from lead poisoning.

These steps include:

- **Get Your Child Tested.** Even if your young children seem healthy, ask your doctor to test them for lead. Connecticut law requires medical providers to test each child for lead at least twice before the age of 5. This is usually conducted at the 12 and 24 month well child visit. Resources for parents can be found at: <https://portal.ct.gov/DPH/Environmental-Health/Lead-Poisoning-Prevention-and-Control/For-Parents>
- **Learn About Lead Paint Hazards.** Flaking, cracking and chipping paint in homes built before 1978 may be a hazard. Learn what you can do to prevent lead paint hazards by visiting www.ct.gov/preventlead or www.ct.gov/plomo for Spanish speakers
- **Understand the Facts!** DPH can provide you with helpful information about preventing childhood lead poisoning. Contact the DPH's Lead Poisoning Prevention and Radon Program at (860) 509-7299