

LEADLETTER

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From the desk of

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Healthy Housing program development at the Ohio Department of Health, Childhood Lead poisoning Prevention Program

A Healthy Housing program is one that incorporates a comprehensive plan to reduce and prevent housing conditions that significantly affects public health. Childhood lead poisoning, respiratory diseases, injuries, exposure to pesticides, indoor toxicants, and combustion gasses have all been linked to poor housing across the nation.

Most public health programs focus narrowly on individual hazards within the home, despite the presence of multiple issues. Using a holistic approach to target common household problems that cause adverse health and safety outcomes will result in positive outcomes with fewer public dollars being expended.

Background

There is an array of factors within a home that can affect the health of a resident, and though there are programs in the state that address some issues individually, a comprehensive plan targeted at creating Healthy Housing will have the greatest impact upon the states residents.

Lead, arsenic, and mercury have adverse affects on health. Lead Poisoning has been on the agenda of policymakers since it was banned in 1978 and can be found in paint, drinking water, dust, soil, and consumer products. Lead poisoning has been correlated with reduced IQ, learning disabilities, impaired hearing, reduced attention span, anemia, damage to the central nervous system, and even death. Arsenic, naturally found in ground water, affects the production of adenosine tri-phosphate (ATP) leading to death from multi-system organ failure. Though water supplied by cities in the United States is regulated, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that 42 million Americans, mostly in rural areas, get their drinking water from private unregulated wells. Finally, mercury is a concern for residents near Lake Erie because it is prevalent in the muscle tissue of the Lake's fish. Mercury is highly toxic to children and damages the central nervous and endocrine systems. Heavy exposure, or exposure over long periods of time, can result in brain damage and untimely death.

- i. Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Healthy Homes Initiative. Retrieved June 19, 2007, from <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/healthyhomes.htm>
- ii. National Healthy Homes Training Center and Network. Essentials for Healthy Homes practitioner's course student's manual. Columbia, MD: National Center for Healthy Housing; 2007.
- iii. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Healthy Homes initiative: Preliminary plan (full report). Washington, DC: Office of lead Hazard Control; April 1999.
- iv. United States Environmental Protection Agency. Radionuclide's (including radon, radium, and uranium). Retrieved June 20, 2007, from <http://www.epa.gov/ttn/atw/hlthef/radionuc.html>