Local approaches to reducing lead in rental housing

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Overview of presentation

- PROCESS: CPLP, 2002-2016
- OUTCOME: Rochester’s Lead Law
- LESSONS LEARNED
Lead in Rochester: 2002

- 2% of U.S. children had elevated blood lead levels
- In New York State, 5% of children
- In Monroe County, 7.4%
- In City of Rochester high risk areas, nearly 25%
- Some neighborhoods exceeded 30%
Needs Assessment: Lead in Rochester, 2002

- Overview of national approaches/research
- Identified high risk neighborhoods
- Focus groups with landlords
- Focus on 1-2 unit private rentals
- Paint, dust, soil in pre-1978 rentals
The 22 Zip Codes, Out of Over 1600, That Accounted for Nearly 40% of the New Cases of Lead Poisoning in 2005 *

* Excluding New York City

Lead in Monroe County
Lead in Rochester

CHILDHOOD LEAD POISONING RATES BY NEIGHBORHOOD

Percent of Kids Screened Who Were Poisoned

% of Children
Below 10%
10 to 14%
15 to 19%
20 to 24%
25 to 29%
30 to 34%

UNIVERSITY of ROCHESTER
Lead and Environmental Justice

- Over **31%** of all of the Latinos who live in the 36 High Risk Zip Codes *in the state* live in the City of Rochester.


(Empire Justice analysis of ACS data, 2005)
Why is lead a problem in Rochester?

- High-risk housing stock
- 87% of housing built prior to 1970
- High poverty rate – 38% of children in poverty
- Many low-value rental properties (60% rental, mean value $53,000)
- Many low-income owner occupants
- In high-risk areas, 85% rent homes
- Housing stock in poor condition
The Coalition to Prevent Lead Poisoning consists of individual and organizations dedicated to ending childhood lead poisoning in Monroe County by 2010. We are public agencies and private landlords, university researchers and parents, and much more. Our goal is ambitious but attainable. This is a fight we can win.”
Coalition to Prevent Lead Poisoning: Three Strategies

1. Community engagement
2. Science-based solutions
3. Systems change – policies and practices

“Lead is a health problem… with a housing solution”
1. Community engagement

- Partnering with existing organizations
- Outreach to community leaders
- Communications campaign

“lead is the silent monster that is stealing our children’s futures”
Communications Campaign

- Make community aware of ongoing problem
  - Prevalence
  - Social costs
  - Fixable problem
- Science-based messaging about solutions
- Make it “economically, politically, and morally unacceptable” to tolerate lead in our community
Making lead “economically, politically, and morally unacceptable…”

- 2002: Lead seen as an unsolvable problem.
- First challenge of CPLP = redefine the issue of lead as a health problem with a *feasible* housing solution.
- Three main components of this message:
  1. Because lead impacts learning, behavior, and health, it is costly to our entire community.
  2. Lead poisoning is a problem created by our society, so we are *all* responsible for solving it.
  3. We CAN and MUST end childhood lead poisoning.
2004 Community Lead Summit

- 500 attendees
- Live call-in show on public television
- National experts contributed to topical sessions
- “Commitment session” at end of day
- Commitments from leaders in all sectors to take key steps to make Monroe Co. lead safe
- Mayor committed to pass lead law before leaving office
2. Science-based solutions

- Science Committee produced FAQ, science summaries from research, reviewed solutions
- Analyses of local housing and health data
- Tapped national experience and research
- “Get the Lead Out” home testing project
Information about hazards = power to avoid hazards?

Child next to old window

Old window
Success is possible…but rare

Only a third of households saw any physical change

Crib next to new window
Tenant next to new window
Impact of GLO: Failure = Success?

- Helped families protect their children…but limited effectiveness in terms of physical change
- Showed gaps in current policy
  - Preventable poisonings
  - Failed systems (10-15 ug/dL, letter to MCDOPH)
- Produced Rochester-specific data
  - GLO findings on extent of hazards in homes (99%)
  - Repair cost estimates lower than expected ($3366)
  - Testing is easy and affordable (visual + wipes)
  - Stories re: failures of current systems shared with Council
  - “We can do this”
“If the people lead well... the leaders will follow...”
3. Systems change – policies and practices

- **Rochester lead law (2005)**
- County pledged to mirror city law in social services inspections, some health $ => city
- Commit to educate landlords *and* tenants
- Seek ongoing lead hazard reduction grants
- Resolutions to evaluate impacts
  - Track emergency housing requests
  - Share blood lead data => map high risk area
  - Annual reporting of inspection results
Five principles for Rochester’s lead law

1. **Targeted roll out**: protect the kids who are at the greatest risk first
2. **Require inspection and lead hazard control**: inspect buildings, not bodies, to find hazards before kids are poisoned
3. **Lead safe work practices**: do the work safely - do not make the problem worse!
4. **Disclosure**: warn people about lead poisoning risks when they buy or rent and when work is being done
5. **Tenant protection**: do not let the tenants be punished for asking for safe housing!
Three policies introduced by City Council to inspect pre-1978 housing

- Private risk assessment of all rental housing
- Private inspection of ALL child-occupied homes (including owner occupied)
- Visual inspection as part of city’s proactive rental housing inspections
Rochester’s Lead Law (2005)

- Added lead to existing proactive rental inspections (Certificate of Occupancy, “C of O”)
- Visual inspections of all units
- Dust wipes in high-risk units that PASS visual inspection
- If unit fails either visual or dust wipes, owner must pay for and pass private clearance (~$175)
- City monitors private clearance firms
- Re-inspection every 3 or 6 years (C of O renewal)
How does it work?

- Pre-1978 rental housing
- Targets “high risk area” as defined by EBL rates
- Multiple triggers for inspections
- Exempts lead free properties
- Landlords can do work
- OK to use “interim controls”
- Requires lead safe work practices/ RRP certification
- Free inspections for owner-occupants
10 years of Rochester’s lead law

- Over 140,000 inspections, 95% pass visual
- 34,744 dust wipes, 90% pass dust wipe
- Evaluations show:
  - No significant increase in emergency housing
  - Lower compliance costs
  - Increased support
  - “Part of doing business”
Lead poisoning declined 2.4 times faster in Rochester than in the rest of New York
Second Coalition HUD grant; CGR Report; United Way designates eradication of lead paint poisoning at a #1 public policy issue, CPLP hosted by United Way

G.L.O formed; CPLP hires first staff; Fund The Fix report completed

GRHF commits funding to lead prevention; Lead Safe Monroe County Plan; RCSD Lead Safe School Policy is passed; Third City HUD grant, OFCS Medical Report of Child in Day Care form revised to specifically list 12 and 24 mo. BLL test results.; CPLP moves to FLHSA

Three lead bills drafted and introduced; Environmental impact study released; City Council passes historic lead ordinance; County agrees to add lead inspections to QHI inspections on public assistance housing

GRHF commits funding to lead prevention; Lead Safe Monroe County Plan; RCSD Lead Safe School Policy is passed; Third City HUD grant, OFCS Medical Report of Child in Day Care form revised to specifically list 12 and 24 mo. BLL test results.; CPLP moves to FLHSA

Secured passage of Gantt/Robach Bill (tax credits for lead hazard repairs) --vetoed; 90% of City properties passing inspections; major local clinical laboratories change wording of EBLL test results to state "blood lead levels in this range still have the potential to cause neurocognitive deficits."

Elimination of County Quality Home Inspection (QHI) program for publicly assisted housing (TANF)

Monroe County drops level of concern from 15 to 10 mg/dl; CPLP awarded EPA Environmental Justice Achievement Award

Senator Hillary Clinton calls CPLP "a national model"; Implementation begins on lead law & QHI inspections; CPLP and WXXI-TV produce 10-minute "Lead Awareness for Parents" DVD

HUD funded communications campaign begins

1999-2012
Lessons Learned

- What (and where) is your lead problem?
- What are your resources?
- What is your goal?
- What tools are available?
- *How will you know* if it’s working?
- How can you begin? With whom?
For more information…

- City of Rochester
  - cityofrochester.gov/lead
  - (585) 428-6520
- Coalition to Prevent Lead Poisoning
  - (585) 224-3125
  - www.letsmakeleadhistory.org

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