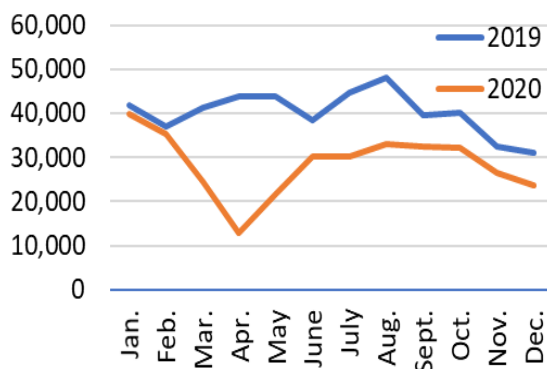


CHILDHOOD LEAD POISONING PREVENTION BRANCH

COVID-19 Pandemic Impacts and Solutions

Number of Children Under 6 Years Old Tested per Month in 2019 and 2020¹



Background & Impacts

The pandemic caused a marked decrease in blood lead testing and created new barriers to providing essential childhood lead poisoning prevention services.

The Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Branch (CLPPB) adapted protocols and processes and created new products in response to the following impacts.

- ▶ Decline in blood lead testing
- ▶ Reduced capacity due to pandemic response work
- ▶ Pandemic safety requirements

Contact Us

Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Branch

Center for Healthy Communities

- ▶ Website: www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/clppb
- ▶ Phone: 510-620-5600

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Strategies to Increase Blood Lead Testing

Outreach Toolkit

CLPPB partnered with the Immunization Branch to develop a [toolkit](#)² to help local health jurisdictions promote lead safety and blood lead testing during the pandemic and transition to contactless outreach.

Web Page

CLPPB created a [web page](#)³ with information about lead-safety during the pandemic and the important role of blood lead testing. Resources are provided for parents, schools, child care providers, and children.

Healthcare Provider Outreach

- ▶ Authored Medical Board of California [newsletter](#)⁴ article sent to all California physicians discussing decreased blood lead testing and the importance of mandated blood lead assessment and testing.
- ▶ Conducted live webinars about childhood lead poisoning prevention, lead exposure risks and effects, screening, and care management.
- ▶ Developed a provider fact sheet about blood lead testing during COVID-19.

Response to Reduced Capacity & Pandemic Safety Requirements

Local Health Jurisdiction Assessment

Data were collected regarding coverage for case management services, remote working capacity, and staff respiratory protection fit-testing status to identify and address potential gaps in service and to support public health nurses (PHNs) and environmental professionals in transitioning to temporary protocols for home visits and environmental investigations (EIs).

Temporary Remote Home Visits

CLPPB developed temporary guidance to protect families and staff from exposure to COVID-19 during EIs and home visits, while ensuring proper identification of lead hazards. The new processes include a comprehensive PHN tele-visit, ongoing remote monitoring and follow-up, and a remote environmental assessment. Following pandemic safety protocols, a full or modified in-person EI is then completed if it cannot be safely deferred.

Virtual Certification Exam Established

The Lead Related Construction certification exam transitioned from an in-person to a virtual format. Lead professionals performing construction projects, investigations, and clearances related to lead poisoning cases can attend the online exam to obtain certification according to Title 17 regulations. Over a period of two weeks, 95 candidates completed the online exam.

¹ Data from RASSCLE surveillance database including both unprocessed and processed blood lead levels as of 3/2/2021. Date the sample was drawn determined the month the child was tested. Each child is counted only once during a month. For blood lead tests without a unique patient identifier, first name, last name, date of birth, and ZIP code were used to deduplicate children.

² Toolkit: www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDC/DEOD/CLPPB/Pages/Toolkit-LeadPrevention-COVID-19.aspx

³ Web page: www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDC/DEOD/CLPPB/Pages/COVIDResources.aspx

⁴ Newsletter: www.mbc.ca.gov/Download/Newsletters/Newsletter2021Winter.pdf