



Spring 2018 press kit with fact sheets, photos and more: <http://goo.gl/LatYnL>

Removing dangerous lead paint now free for qualifying homeowners

- *Lead poisons people – especially kids – and can cause lifelong problems.*
- *Grand Rapids zip code 49507 continues to lead state for most lead-poisoned kids.*
- *Prevention is key.*
- *There is funding to safely remove lead paint from older homes.*
- *Program is now free to eligible homeowners throughout the city of Grand Rapids.*
- *Take advantage of the spring home-improvement season to fix your home before this funding opportunity runs out.*

GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN – April 11, 2018 – People who live in the City of Grand Rapids – particularly those who live in homes built before 1978 – probably have lead in the paint *inside and outside* their homes. Lead is bad – especially for kids, babies and pregnant women. It causes brain damage and learning disabilities.

Lead poisoning can be prevented. There's HUD funding to remove lead paint SAFELY through a program known locally as *Get the Lead Out!* The program is led by the city of Grand Rapids in collaboration with the Healthy Homes Coalition of West Michigan, the Kent County Health Department and the Rental Property Owners Association.

Recently, the program was simplified, making participation free for eligible homeowners. The program is available to renters, homeowners and landlords who meet certain eligibility requirements. Repairs typically include new windows and siding.

“This is a great opportunity to improve your home and make it healthier,” says Doug Stek, housing rehabilitation supervisor with the City of Grand Rapids. “Sometimes people will attempt to remove lead paint by themselves – scraping and removing the paint – but that can be dangerous and make a bad situation worse. Highly trained contractors work to make homes lead-safe through the *Get the Lead Out!* program. Think about it: just a week or two to improve your home and, most important, to help the people who live in it.”

“I would encourage the community to take advantage of these funds for the sake of our children,” says Kent County Commissioner Robert S. Womack. “When I ran for office, this was my No. 1 issue. Keeping our kids healthy is crucial – they are our future.”

It doesn't take much lead to create a toxic situation. One gram of lead dust is enough to make 25,000 square feet of flooring hazardous for young children, according to research jointly conducted by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (US-EPA).

"We're talking an amount as small as the equivalent of a packet of Sweet'N Low – just that small amount is enough to contaminate the floors of a dozen homes in Grand Rapids," says Paul Haan, executive director of the Healthy Homes Coalition of West Michigan.

Grand Rapids [Mayor Rosalynn Bliss has made tackling the lead problem a priority](#). She spoke at length about the issue during her annual State of the City address earlier this year.

The Kent County Lead Task Force published its [Ending Childhood Lead Exposure in Kent County report](#) in January.

"More and more people are learning that lead is bad, but a lot of people still don't know what lurks in their home and how it can harm children. And many don't know that there's funding to help safely remove lead paint. That's why we are relentless about spreading the word about this critical issue," Haan said.

The Healthy Homes Coalition of West Michigan has a five-point plan that spans discussions at state, county and local levels. Healthy Homes recommends that:

1. All children under age 6 must be tested, especially at ages 1 and 2. When a child is lead poisoned, the source of poisoning needs to be discovered.
2. Homes must be tested before more children are poisoned.
3. Homes must be fixed before more children are poisoned.
4. Contractors must work lead-safe.
5. The community must be engaged and listened to every step of the way.

RENTERS, HOMEOWNERS, LANDLORDS: If you live in and / or own a home in the city of Grand Rapids, contact the Healthy Homes Coalition of West Michigan at [\(616\) 241-3300](tel:6162413300) or go to gettheleadoutgr.org to learn more. Or, contact the city of Grand Rapids Community Development Department at [616-456-3030](tel:6164563030). The HUD funding, and the timeframe to participate, is limited.

###

About Healthy Homes Coalition of West Michigan

The Healthy Homes Coalition is an independent, local non-profit organization that seeks to ensure that all children have the opportunity to grow up in a healthy home that is free from environmental hazards. More at <http://www.healthyhomescoalition.org/>.

About the *Get the Lead Out!* Program

The *Get the Lead Out!* lead-hazard control program is a targeted effort to fix homes. It is part of the larger efforts of the *Get the Lead Out!* Collaborative, which also focuses on getting children tested and connected to health care services, educating the public and advocating for common-sense laws and policies to protect children. *Get the Lead Out!* is a program led by the City of Grand Rapids in collaboration with

the Healthy Homes Coalition of West Michigan, the Kent County Health Department and the Rental Property Owners Association. More at <http://gettheleadoutgr.org/>.



MEDIA CONTACT:

Molly Klimas
klimas@intentpr.com
klimasmolly@gmail.com
616-443-4647