

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contact:** Paul Haan  
Healthy Homes Coalition of West Michigan  
(616) 241-3300 (office)  
(616) 734-9443 (cell)

May 16, 2012

## **Childhood Lead Poisoning Level Lowered by Federal Government**

GRAND RAPIDS – The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention accepted the recommendations of a Scientific Advisory Board to lower the level of concern for childhood lead poisoning today. The new reference value, which is based on population blood lead levels, would focus action on those children with the highest blood lead levels (i.e. those above the 97.5th percentile). Currently, that reference value would set the level of concern at 5.0 ug/dL. Previously, the level of concern was 10.0 ug/dL.

What does this mean for west Michigan? In Grand Rapids in 2011, 57 children birth through age five were identified as having elevated blood lead levels above 10.0 ug/dL, while 553 children had levels above 5.0ug/dL. For Kent County, the respective figures are 68 and 727 children affected.

Similar figures are reported in other west Michigan communities: Muskegon & Muskegon Heights - from 22 to 155, Kalamazoo - from 10 to 164, Jackson - from 10 to 139, Battle Creek - from 5 to 49, and Benton Harbor - from 8 to 46.

The Healthy Homes Coalition stands in strong support of these recommendations, acknowledging the decades of research that has called for this change. Healthy Homes Coalition Executive Director Paul Haan said “We are calling upon the federal government and the State of Michigan to heed the CDC recommendations and the findings of sound science by reinstating funding for childhood lead poisoning prevention. Specifically, the federal government should restore a recent funding cut to the CDC Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program (from \$29 million to \$2 million). The State of Michigan should move forward with an appropriations proposal to include \$1 million in the State budget for childhood lead poisoning prevention and lead abatement in homes.”

The CDC recognizes that this move will change the focus of the efforts to end childhood lead poisoning from intervention to primary prevention. One of the CDC's recommendations states, "Elected officials and the leaders of health, housing, and code enforcement agencies can help protect the children in their jurisdictions from lead exposure in their homes through many activities. CDC should work with officials to ensure adoption of a suite of preventive policies." The Healthy Homes Coalition is committed to working to achieve these preventive policies.

National Center for Healthy Housing Release: <http://www.nchh.org/tabid/139/default.aspx?ContentID=146>

CDC report: [http://www.nchh.org/Portals/0/Contents/CDC\\_Response\\_Lead\\_Exposure\\_Recs.pdf](http://www.nchh.org/Portals/0/Contents/CDC_Response_Lead_Exposure_Recs.pdf)

# # #