

Community Engagement Policy for Decreasing Childhood Lead Poisoning in Philadelphia

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Abstract : Childhood lead poisoning is an issue that continues to plague major U.S. cities. Lead poisoning has been linked to decreases in academic achievement and IQ at levels as low as 5 ug/dL. Despite efforts from the Philadelphia Health Department to curtail systemic childhood lead poisoning, children continue to be identified with elevated blood lead levels (EBLLs) above the CDC reference level for diagnosis. This problem disproportionately affects low-income Black communities. At the moment, remediation is costly, and with the current policies in place, comprehensive remediation seems unrealistic. This research investigates community engagement policy and the ways pre-existing resources in target communities can be adjusted to decrease childhood lead poisoning. The study was done with two methods: content analysis and case studies. The content analysis includes 12 interviews from stakeholders and five published policy recommendations. The case studies focus on Baltimore, Chicago, Rochester, and St. Louis, four cities with significant childhood lead poisoning. Target communities were identified by mapping five factors that indicate a higher risk for lead poisoning. Seven priority zipcodes were identified for the model developed in this study. For these urban centers, 28 policy solutions and suggestions were identified, with three being identified at least four times in the content analysis and case studies. These three solutions create an interdependent model that offers increased community awareness and engagement with the issue that could potentially improve health and social outcomes for at-risk children.

Keywords : at-risk populations, community engagement, environmental justice, policy translation

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