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## PRESS RELEASE

### **Lead Poisoning Prevention Week: October 25-31, 2020**

The Iroquois County Public Health Department (ICPHD) is pleased to recognize National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week, October 25-31, 2020. Lead poisoning is largely preventable with increased testing and education. Through the Lead Poisoning Case Management Program, ICPHD aims to raise local awareness of the danger associated with lead exposure and poisoning. ICPHD's goal is to educate parents on how to reduce exposure to lead in their environment, prevent its serious health effects, and learn about the importance of testing children for lead.

About 3.6 million American households have children under 6 years of age who live in homes with lead exposure hazards. According to the CDC, about 500,000 American children between ages of 1 and 5 years have blood lead levels greater than or equal to the blood reference value, the level at which CDC recommends public health actions. "Exposure to lead can seriously harm a child's health and cause many adverse effects..." stated Vonda Pruitt, Director of Nursing at ICPHD, "lead exposure can cause damage to the brain and nervous system, slowed growth development, learning and behavior difficulties, and also hearing and speech problems."

Lead can be found inside and outside the home, including in the water that travels through lead pipes or in the soil around the house. However, the most common source of exposure is from lead-based paint, which was used in many homes built before 1978. Adults and children can get lead into their bodies by breathing in the lead dust (especially during activities such as renovations, repairs or painting) or by swallowing lead dust that settles in food, food preparation surfaces, floors, window sills, and other places, or eating paint chips or soil that contain lead. Children can also become exposed to lead dust from adults' jobs or hobbies, and from some metal toys or toys painted with lead-based paint. Not all children react the same way to lead exposure. Often, due to housing circumstances, minority and low-income communities have a higher exposure rate to lead.

Individuals are encouraged to contact the Iroquois County Public Health Department at **815.432.2483** or visit the following websites for more information on lead poisoning prevention:

- Center for Disease Control and Prevention- [cdc.gov/nceh/lead/](https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/)
- Illinois Department of Public Health- [www.dph.illinois.gov/illinoislead](https://www.dph.illinois.gov/illinoislead)