



Larry Hogan, Governor · Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor · Dennis R. Schrader, Acting Secretary

## Notice to Maryland Health Care Providers of Changes to Blood Lead Level Testing and Reporting Requirements, and New Resources for Providers and Parents

March 2, 2021

Dear Colleague:

The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) and the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) have updated regulations and resources in response to recent changes in Maryland law. The most important changes are:

- Effective October 1, 2019, the legal definition<sup>1</sup> of a “reference level” for blood lead (formerly the “action level” of 10 mcg/dL) in Maryland is **5 mcg/dL** or greater, making the legal definition of an elevated blood lead level consistent with the clinical definition adopted by MDH in 2012.
- Effective July 1, 2020, MDE has new requirements for the blood lead laboratory requisition, and a new requirement to report a blood lead level (BLL) test of **5 mcg/dL** or greater to MDE within 24 hours.
- Revised case management guidelines for health care providers.

### *Changes in laboratory testing requirements*

Providers are reminded that a completed laboratory requisition for childhood blood lead levels must now include the following additional information, as per [changes to COMAR 26.02.01](#) (changes shown in italics):

1. Additional demographic information:
  - *Country of birth and ethnicity;*
  - *Medical assistance identification number, if the child is enrolled in Medicaid or the Maryland Children’s Health Program;*
  - *Provider’s national provider identifier (NPI);*
2. If the draw site is different from the health care provider’s office, the laboratory’s or other facility’s name, address, *telephone number, and facility NPI;*

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<sup>1</sup> House Bill 1233 (Acts of 2019), the “Maryland Healthy Children Act,” changed the reference level of an elevated blood lead (EBL) from 10 µg/dL to a reference level determined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), currently 5 µg/dL. If the CDC changes this reference level, the threshold value would automatically go into effect in Maryland one year after changes are made by the CDC.

3. All of the following information about the laboratory performing the blood lead analysis:
  - a. Laboratory name, address, telephone number, and *clinical laboratory improvement amendment (CLIA) number*;
  - b. *Laboratory method used to analyze the blood specimen*;
  - c. *The limit of detection for the method used to analyze the blood specimen*; and
  - d. *If reporting a “no result” test result, the limit of detection for the laboratory (“less than” the numeric limit of detection)*;

In addition, laboratories, and clinics performing point of care blood lead testing, must report test results to MDE by the close of business of the next business day for a BLL  $\geq$  5  $\mu$ g/dL.

#### *Changes in the clinical management of children with possible lead exposure*

MDH and MDE have released new [2020 Maryland Guidelines for the Assessment and Management of Childhood Lead Exposure](#). The Guidelines provide guidance on retesting and monitoring the health status of children with a confirmed BLL  $\geq$  5  $\mu$ g/dL both clinically and until all recommended environmental investigations and mitigation strategies have been completed. MDH regulations for childhood blood lead testing ([COMAR 10.11.04](#)), still require all children born on or after January 1, 2015 to be tested for lead at 12 and 24 months, or at least once for a child 24 months or older and younger than 6 years old for whom there is no evidence of a previous blood lead test.

MDH reminds providers that, as an alternative to completing the [Blood Lead Testing Certificate \(Form 4620\)](#) for parents whose children are requesting it for admission to a public pre-kindergarten program, kindergarten, or first grade ([COMAR 10.11.04.05](#)), providers now have the option of instead providing a copy of the child’s lead test report from ImmuNet.

#### *New resources for health care providers and patients affected by lead*

MDH is partnering with the Maryland chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics to offer up to 3 hours of **free continuing medical education (CME)** to promote continued attention to this important public health problem. To learn more about these services and the free CME, visit the MDH [lead poisoning prevention website](#).

MDH has established [two new programs](#) for children who are enrolled in or eligible for the Maryland Children’s Health Insurance Program (MCHP).

- *Healthy Homes for Healthy Kids* will pay for lead removal in owner-occupied homes, certain rental properties, and other locations where the child spends at least 10 hours/week if it is determined to be the source of the lead exposure. To qualify, a child must be eligible for or enrolled in MCHP, under age 19, and have a recent (in the last 12 months) BLL  $\geq$  5  $\mu$ g/dL. To learn more, contact us at 1-866-703-3266, or [mdh.healthyhomes@maryland.gov](mailto:mdh.healthyhomes@maryland.gov).

- *Home Visiting Program for Children with Lead or Asthma:* Nine local health departments<sup>2</sup> now also provide home visiting services for children with lead poisoning (or moderate to severe asthma) through an MCHP program. Trained environmental case managers and community health workers will provide up to six home visits to assess the home environment for potential lead hazards and, provide education for caregivers, and work with families to reduce or eliminate lead exposure at no cost to the family. A child must be eligible for or enrolled in MCHP, under age 19, and have a BLL  $\geq$  5  $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$  in the past 12 months (or moderate to severe asthma). For more information, call us at 1-866-703-3266, or [mdh.healthyhomes@maryland.gov](mailto:mdh.healthyhomes@maryland.gov).

*More information*

MDE, Lead Poisoning Prevention Program:

<https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/Land/LeadPoisoningPrevention/Pages/index.aspx>.

Phone inquiries: 410-537-3825.

Email: [mdclr.mde@maryland.gov](mailto:mdclr.mde@maryland.gov)

MDH Lead program:

<https://phpa.health.maryland.gov/OEHFP/EH/Pages/Lead.aspx>

New MDH programs for children with lead exposure who are enrolled in or eligible for Medicaid/MCHIP:

<https://phpa.health.maryland.gov/OEHFP/EH/Pages/CHIPEnvCaseMgmt.aspx>

Phone inquiries toll-free at 1-866-703-3266

Email: [mdh.healthyhomes@maryland.gov](mailto:mdh.healthyhomes@maryland.gov)

Sincerely,



Clifford Mitchell, MS, MD, MPH,  
Director, Environmental Health Bureau

Enclosure: 2020 Maryland Guidelines for the Assessment and Management of Childhood Lead Exposure

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<sup>2</sup> Baltimore City, and the counties of Baltimore, Charles, Dorchester, Frederick, Harford, Prince George's, St. Mary's, and Wicomico.