



SAN DIEGO
HOUSING
COMMISSION

News Release

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SAN DIEGO HOUSING COMMISSION'S "HOME SAFE HOME" PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM SCREENED 125 CHILDREN FOR LEAD POISONING AT FIESTA DEL SOL, SIX TESTED POSITIVE

*Grant from U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
provided funds for free blood level testing*

San Diego, CA—One hundred and twenty-five San Diego children were tested for lead in their blood at the annual Fiesta del Sol held in César Chávez Park in a screening event sponsored by the San Diego Housing Commission (SDHC) ["Home Safe Home"](#) program. Of those, six tested positive for lead.

"We're very fortunate in San Diego to have federal funding to sponsor a program for families who may be unaware that their children may be suffering from lead poisoning," said Richard C. Gentry, SDHC President & CEO. "Since 2010 we have helped test 384 children. These early tests are critical for protecting their health and safety."

Saturday's testing was the largest of five blood-lead screening events conducted in San Diego since October 27, 2010, as part of "Home Safe Home."

Lead is most commonly found on exterior-painted surfaces, interior woodwork, doors and windows, and exposure can come from breathing in or ingesting dust from lead-based paint as it chips or deteriorates over time. Children in homes built before 1978, when lead-based paint was banned nationally for residential use, are considered to be at higher risk for exposure.

The tests were funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, which is administered by SDHC. The blood lead level testing is conducted in partnership with the Environmental Health Coalition and La Maestra Community Health Center.

"The testing has performed a valuable service to the community and we thank our partners at the San Diego Housing Commission and La Maestra," said Leticia Ayala, Associate Director for Programs at the Environmental Health Coalition. "The families who tested positive now have some guidance and we'll help them through it."

Using a pin prick to a finger, the tests determine how much lead is in a child's blood using portable analyzers purchased by SDHC. Exposure to such sources as lead-based paint can have severe effects on children including brain damage, learning disabilities, reduced muscle and bone growth and hearing loss.

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Test results were available within three minutes. Any families with children who test positive for lead will be referred to local clinics for further medical evaluation, including a blood retest to confirm the initial results and provide a more accurate diagnosis. Families also will be provided with information on how to eliminate lead hazards from their homes.

Many parents simply were seeking reassurance from the tests. “We just want to make sure they’re OK,” said Julia, who had her four year-old daughter and six year-old son tested. “It’s an easy way to do it.”

“It never hurts to know,” said another mom, Anna, whose six year-old daughter was tested. “Safety first.”

And Cynthia, whose six year-old son was tested, said: “I know it’s good for him, for his health. We live in an older house, too – 1971 – so I’m not sure.”

Additional blood lead testing events will be announced later.

In four previous blood lead testing events since October 27, 2010, 259 children were tested and two were found with lead in their blood.

Location	Date	Children tested	Tested positive
Cherokee Point Elementary School	October 27, 2010	106	0
King Chavez Elementary School	April 14, 2011	117	2
Neighborhood House Association	September 17, 2011	24	0
Environmental Health Coalition Health Fair (Cesar Chavez Park)	September 24, 2011	12	0
Fiesta del Sol (Cesar Chavez Park)	August 11, 2012	125	6
TOTAL		384	8

The testing is part of a grant to eliminate hazards to children from lead-based paint, also allowing SDHC to remediate homes with lead-based paint hazards. SDHC has received eight HUD Lead Hazard Control grants since 2002, totaling \$22.4 million.

- 2002 \$1.89 million
- 2005 7.0 million
- 2008: 7.0 million
- 2010: 4.1 million
- 2012: 2.48 million

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The most recent grant, announced [June 14 2012](#), will allow SDHC to test 175 homes for lead-based paint hazards and remediate 135 of them.

In addition to blood testing and lead-based paint remediation, SDHC uses the HUD funds to conduct “Healthy Homes” assessments for such problems as roaches, rodents, dust mites, mold and moisture, poor indoor air quality and debris or unsafe conditions that can cause injuries.

For more information visit [SDHC.org](#).

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