



SAN DIEGO  
HOUSING  
COMMISSION

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## **NEWS RELEASE**

**April 14, 2011**

**HOUSING COMMISSION'S "HOME SAFE HOME" PROGRAM TESTS 119  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILDREN AND THEIR SIBLINGS FOR  
HIGH BLOOD LEAD LEVELS TO COMBAT LEAD POISONING IN  
CITY OF SAN DIEGO**

*Agency Receives \$4.1 Million in Federal Grants Targeting  
Lead-Based Paint And Other Home Health Hazards*

**San Diego, CA**—Two of 119 students tested positive today for elevated blood lead levels during an outreach campaign of the 2011 "Home Safe Home" program by the San Diego Housing Commission. The testing was conducted at King Chavez Primary School in Grant Hill to protect low-income children and families in the City of San Diego from lead-based paint and other home health hazards.

Funding for "Home Safe Home" comes from two U. S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) federal grants comprised of \$3.1 million from HUD's Lead-Based Paint Hazard Control grant program and \$1.0 million from HUD's Healthy Homes Production grant program. The \$4.1 million grant was officially presented by HUD to the Housing Commission today at the school.

"Prolonged exposure to lead, especially among children, can have serious health consequences," remarked Richard C. Gentry, President and Chief Executive Officer of the San Diego Housing Commission. "We are grateful to HUD for the grant money that will protect hundreds of families from this silent danger, which you can't see, taste or smell."

The two non-invasive Lead Care II blood analyzers used today by La Maestra Community Health Center were purchased by the Housing Commission. Test results are immediate—within three minutes. If a child tests positive, families are referred for further medical evaluation. In addition, families are offered a free home inspection through the "Home Safe Home" program. If evidence of lead-based paint is found, the home is scheduled for lead remediation.

"My two-year old daughter tested positive for lead poisoning caused by lead paint from a house we were renting two years ago," said Patty Saenz. "If not for "Home Safe Home", we would have never known."

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In partnership with the Environmental Health Coalition, primary outreach efforts for home lead remediation will focus on high-risk target areas where homes built before 1979 still pose a danger from lead-based paint. The targeted communities include City Heights, Linda Vista, Logan Heights and Sherman Heights.

Karen Griego-West, head of the Healthy Homes Program for HUD in Los Angeles presented the \$4.1 million grant award to the Housing Commission at today's news conference.

"The lead abatement program here in the City of San Diego is tremendous," said Griego-West. "That is reflected in the significant grant amount the Housing Commission received from HUD for its "Home Safe Home" program."

Critical components of the comprehensive three-year "Home Safe Home" program grant include:

- Blood lead level testing of 215 children
- Household lead remediation in 200 homes
- Community outreach and education on the hazards of lead poisoning
- Healthy Home interventions in 200 homes

The larger grant allows for a continuation of home lead remediation under the "Home Safe Home" program which was established in 2002. Since inception, "Home Safe Home" has facilitated lead remediation in 1,006 San Diego homes and protected 1,250 children from the devastating impacts of lead poisoning.

The \$1.0 million Healthy Homes Production grant expands the "Home Safe Home" program to target housing-related health hazards. Home interventions for 200 families will focus on integrative pest management (roaches, rodents, and dust mites), mold and moisture control, indoor air quality, and home safety.

For more information on "Home Safe Home", please call the Housing Commission at (619) 578-7521, or visit the Web site at [www.sdhc.org](http://www.sdhc.org)

"Home Safe Home" is administered by the San Diego Housing Commission on behalf of the City of San Diego. Partners include:

- U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD)
- Environmental Health Coalition
- City of San Diego Environmental Services
- City of San Diego Redevelopment Agency
- County of San Diego Health Services

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- La Maestra Community Health Center
- American Lung Association
- Urban Corps of San Diego County
- Rebuilding Together San Diego
- Richard Heath & Associates—SDG&E Energy Team
- Metropolitan Area Advisory Committee (MAAC)
- Campesinos Unidos
- Southeastern Economic Development Corporation (SEDC)
- Bayside Community Center
- Mid-City CAN
- Healthy Homes Collaborative
- Sherman Heights Community Center

**BACKGROUND:**

**Hazards of Lead**

- Many homes built before 1979 have lead-based paint, which can become hazardous if it is peeling, chipping, chalking, cracking or disturbed by uncontained renovation/painting activities.
- Lead poisoning is a serious problem that threatens the health of residents, especially children.
- Lead blood tests are measured in micrograms per deciliter with a measurement above 10 considered serious.
- Children under six years of age are at higher risk for lead poisoning because their bodies absorb more lead, and because their hand-to-mouth activities increase exposure. Even small amounts of lead can have severe effects on a child’s nervous system – and can cause brain damage, learning disabilities, reduced muscle and bone growth, and hearing loss. There is no cure so it is critical to eliminate lead hazards before exposure can occur.
- Higher levels of exposure can cause devastating effects including seizures, unconsciousness and even death.
- By removing lead hazards and properly maintaining any remaining lead surfaces in a dwelling, lead exposure can be reduced or eliminated.

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## **2008 Lead Hazard Prevention and Control Ordinance**

Recognizing that childhood lead poisoning is the number one preventable environmental health problem facing children today, the City of San Diego in 2008 adopted one of the most comprehensive lead-related ordinances in the nation called the Lead Hazard Prevention and Control Ordinance. The law's primary goal is to eliminate lead hazards generated from lead-based paint before a child is exposed.

The ordinance established a comprehensive framework for childhood lead poisoning prevention, affecting property owners, home improvement stores, stores that sell or rent power washing equipment and licensed childcare facilities. The Ordinance requires mandatory screening of children enrolling in licensed child-care programs.

### **"Home Safe Home Program"**

The "Home Safe Home" program is available to low-income residents of the City of San Diego, with top priority being given to units housing children under 6-years old with elevated blood lead levels.

"Home Safe Home" has received over \$20 million in HUD funding since 2002. Coupled with the City of San Diego's Lead Hazard Prevention and Control Ordinance adopted in 2008, which established a strict and comprehensive framework for childhood lead poisoning prevention, the effort constitutes one of the most progressive lead abatement programs nationwide.

The \$4.1 million in federal grants are expected to fund lead remediation in 200 housing units.

Maximum grant amounts are:

- \$10,000 for single-family structures
- \$5,000 per unit for multi-family structures. An additional \$5,000 per project will be made available for multi-family projects to control lead hazards in common areas.
- Once a property qualifies for remediation, property owners are required to competitively bid their projects and to select the lowest responsive bid. If the program budget is insufficient to cover total project costs, the property owner will be required to provide supplemental funding.

Community outreach events to educate families about the dangers of lead exposure are conducted by the Environmental Health Coalition.

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## **Lead Abatement Job Training**

Job training employment opportunities targeting low and very low-income persons, particularly those receiving housing assistance, is also a requirement of the grant funding.

Commonly referred to as Section 3, the provision is contained in the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968 and establishes the legal basis for providing jobs and awarding contracts to businesses in areas receiving certain HUD financial assistance.

To meet this requirement, the Achievement Academy of the San Diego Housing Commission is conducting commercial painter training classes in partnership with Sherwin-Williams and the San Diego Job Corps. The goal is to provide lead remediation training opportunities to 100 persons who may be hired by the companies contracted by property owners to conduct the remediation.

“Home Safe Home” target areas were identified using a Geographical Information System (GIS) that evaluated data including: census, medical, socioeconomic, age and condition of housing, elevated blood lead level rates and housing code enforcement case incident rates.

Combining these data sources, 83 of the City of San Diego’s 290 census tracts were identified for the target area. Of 405,543 residents living in the target area, 35,479 (8.7%) are children under the age of five. The target area represents one of the most ethnically diverse and traditionally underserved areas of the City. Over 37% do not speak English as their primary language.

For more information, please visit the San Diego Housing Commission Web site at [www.sdhc.org](http://www.sdhc.org).

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*Established in 1979, the San Diego Housing Commission provides a variety of award-winning affordable housing programs that stimulate the local economy, revitalize neighborhoods, and help improve the lives of nearly 76,000 San Diegans annually.*