SCREENING INFORMATION

District of Columbia law requires that all children under the age of six be screened for lead. This "universal screening" requirement is in place because close to 90% of the District's housing was built prior to 1978, the year lead paint was banned for use in the nation's housing stock. This means that an overwhelming majority of the children living in the nation's capitol are at risk of exposure to lead paint. Exposure can occur when paint is not well maintained, and it can also occur when renovation or maintenance work is not conducted in a lead-safe manner.

It does not take much exposure to lead for harmful health consequences to occur, and the younger the child, the more potentially serious the health hazard becomes. Pregnant women are also a special risk group, because the lead they are exposed to goes right to the fetus. Adults are also at risk of health consequences when they are exposed to lead, but it generally takes a much heavier dose of lead exposure for harm to occur to an adult than it does for a child. Bottom line: there is no safe level of lead exposure, and the key to prevent harm is to prevent exposure.

District law requires that all children who live here must get screened as follows:

- Between the ages of 6 months and 14 months of age, and again
- Between the ages of 22 and 26 months of age.
- If a child who lives in the District has not been screened at these ages, they must be screened at least once before they are 6 years old.
- District law also requires that all children must be screened before entering daycare, pre-school, or kindergarten. This can be done at any of the above-listed opportunities.

In addition to the above, children should be screened again whenever there is a possibility they have been recently exposed to lead.

If a child is found to have an elevated blood lead level (consisting of 10 micrograms of lead per deciliter of blood or more, expressed as 10 µg/dL or greater), the District Government will provide case management assistance. This consists of a case manager meeting with the child's family to answer questions the family may have and to provide helpful recommendations to assist the family to prevent further potential harm.

Case management assistance that the District Department of the Environment (DDOE) provides also involves what is called an "environmental investigation." This is basically a lead inspection of the child's home and other places that could be where the child got exposed to lead. Once the DDOE investigation is complete, the family will receive a "risk assessment report" which will detail where lead hazards were found. If lead-based paint hazards are found in the child's home, the property owner will receive instructions about next steps that are needed to eliminate those hazards.