

October 31, 2016

The Honorable Julián Castro
Regulations Division, Office of General Counsel
Department of Housing and Urban Development
451 7th Street, SW, Room 10276
Washington, DC 20410

Re: Requirements for Notification, Evaluation and Reduction of Lead Based Paint Hazards in Federally Owned Residential Property and Housing Receiving Federal Assistance; Response to Elevated Blood Lead Levels (Docket No: FR 5816-P-01, RIN 2501-AD77)

Dear Secretary Castro:

On behalf of the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), I am writing to provide comments on the proposed rule “Requirements for Notification, Evaluation and Reduction of Lead Based Paint Hazards in Federally Owned Residential Property and Housing Receiving Federal Assistance; Response to Elevated Blood Lead Levels.” NACCHO is the voice of the nearly 3,000 local health departments across the country. Local health departments develop policies and create environments that make it easier for people to be healthy and safe, including informing the public of the hazards of lead-based paint on children’s health.^{1, 2}

Children are vulnerable to environmental threats. Pound-for-pound, children are exposed to more contaminants in the air, food, water and physical environment than adults. Further, children are more susceptible than adults to environmental exposures because their physiological functions are relatively immature and their developing organs are more vulnerable to harm.³

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that about half a million children in the United States ages one to five have blood lead levels greater than 5µg/dL (5 micrograms of lead per deciliter), the reference level at which point the CDC recommends public health actions to be initiated.⁴ In addition, the burden of lead poisoning falls disproportionately on low income families and families of color, with African American children more than two times more likely to experience lead poisoning than white children.⁵

NACCHO offers the following comments and recommendations in response to the proposed rule. NACCHO supports the proposed rule for conforming the Department of Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) regulations to the blood lead reference value established by the CDC, and also to the existing HUD Guidelines for the Evaluation and Control of Lead-Based Paint Hazards in Housing. The proposed revision will enable local health departments to take action,



protecting children sooner using the most recent CDC guidance. Some local jurisdictions have already begun to implement certain interventions at 5 µg/dL.

Additionally, HUD requested comment on the implementation date following promulgation of the final rule, citing a range from one month to one year and suggesting 6 months. We agree with HUD that one month is too short, but we disagree that 6 months is needed. Because many jurisdictions are already using the new CDC reference value, we believe the rule can be implemented in 3 months.

We look forward to working with HUD and other agencies to update various lead poisoning prevention regulations and support local health department's response to elevated blood lead levels in children under 6 living in federally assisted living facilities. Thank you for your attention to these recommendations.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact Eli Briggs, Senior Government Affairs Director at ebriggs@naccho.org or 202/507-4194.

Sincerely,



LaMar Hasbrouck, MD, MPH
Executive Director

References

1. NACCHO Statement of Policy (2013). Child Lead Poisoning.
<http://www.naccho.org/uploads/downloadable-resources/00-03-Child-Lead-Poisoning.pdf>
2. NACCHO Statement of Policy (2013). Children's Environmental Health.
<http://www.naccho.org/uploads/downloadable-resources/99-12-Childrens-Environmental-Health.pdf>
3. Mott, L. Fore, D. Curtis, J. and Solomon, G. (1997) *Our Children at Risk: The 5 Worst Environmental Threats to Their Health*. New York, NY: Natural Resources Defense Council
4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2016). *Lead*. Retrieved October 28, 2016 from www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/
5. Alliance for Healthy Homes. (2005). *Understanding New National Data on Lead Poisoning*.
<http://www.afhh.org>