


Pat Quinn, Governor
LaMar Hasbrouck, MD, MPH, Director

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Health Care Providers,
Illinois Local Health Departments

FROM: Bernard (Tom) Johnson
Chief, Division of Laboratories 

DATE: November 1, 2013

SUBJECT: Clinical Lead Testing by IDPH Laboratories

On January 4, 2012, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Advisory Committee on Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention approved a resolution to adopt the recommendation to use a reference value based on the 97.5th percentile of the National Health and Nutritional Examination Survey (NHANES) to identify children staying for extended periods of time in environments that expose them to lead hazards. The new reference value is based on the population of children aged 1 year to 5 years in the United States who are in the top 2.5 percent of children when tested for lead in their blood. Currently, the reference value is 5 micrograms per deciliter ($\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$) of lead in blood. That means 97.5 percent of the population have blood lead levels below $5\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$, and 2.5 percent have blood lead levels of $5\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ or above.

In May 2012, CDC concurred with the recommendation of its Federal Advisory Committee on Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention to change the "level of concern" of $10\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ to a "reference value" to be revised on a four-year cycle. Based on the new reference value, any child with a blood lead level greater than $5\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ will be considered "at risk."

Beginning January 1, 2014, the Department's laboratory will include the CDC reference value on its clinical lead laboratory reports. Information on lead poisoning prevention in Illinois can be found at <http://www.idph.state.il.us/illinoislead>, and information on the CDC's new reference value can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead>.

If you have questions, you may contact your local health department or the Illinois Lead Program Medical Consultant at 312-227-7022. For questions regarding laboratory testing, please contact the IDPH Division of Laboratories at 217-782-6562.

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