

AN OVERVIEW OF CHILDHOOD LEAD EXPOSURE IN NEW YORK



New York has more known cases of children with elevated blood levels than any other state.

What's At Stake

New York continues to suffer a troubling crisis of childhood lead exposure, with more known cases of elevated child blood lead levels than any other state¹ and with childhood lead poisoning cases on the rise due to collateral effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.² As a leader of the [Lead Free Kids New York](#) coalition, Children's Defense Fund – New York (CDF–NY) implores the State to address this urgent – albeit entirely preventable – crisis.

New York's Childhood Lead Poisoning Burden

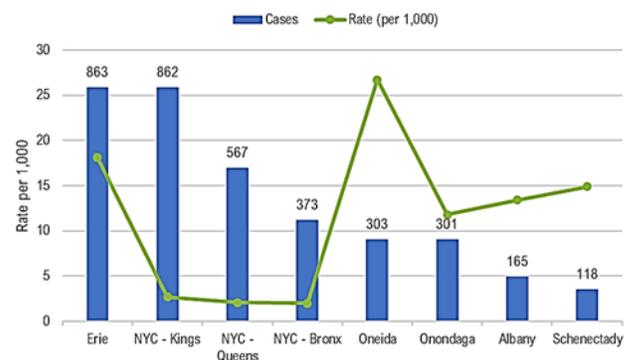
There is no safe level of lead in children.

- Exposure to lead can cause neurological and behavioral disorders.
- Childhood lead exposure rates for communities across our state and in New York City are **five to six times higher** than those in Flint, Michigan at the peak of its water crisis.³
- **28,820 New York children** born in 2019 (12 percent of births) have blood lead levels greater than 2 micrograms per deciliter ($\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$).⁴

Lead exposure among New York children born in 2019 is projected to carry an estimated **\$6.4 billion lifetime economic burden**.

- Our State and local governments carry an economic burden of **\$1.1 billion**.
- Reduced lifetime productivity, premature mortality and increased spending on health care utilization, education and social assistance contribute to economic losses.⁵

Ex. 1 NYC and 5 NY Counties with Highest Prevalence of Lead Exposure, 2014-2016



Lead exposure is highest in Erie, Kings and Queens counties.

¹"Blood Lead Levels (Mg/DL) among U.S. Children < 72 Months of Age, by State, Year, and Blood Lead Level (BLL) Group", Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, accessed April 24, 2021, <https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/docs/CBLS-National-Table-Update-042619-508.pdf>

²"More Childhood Lead Poisoning Is a Side Effect of Covid Lockdowns," *The New York Times*, March 11, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/11/health/virus-lead-poisoning-children.html>.

³"Special Report: Despite Progress, Lead Hazards Vex New York," *Reuters*, November 14, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/usa-lead-newyork/>.

⁴"Value of Lead Prevention," Altarum, accessed April 24, 2021, <http://valueofleadprevention.org/calculations.php?state=New+York>.

⁵ Ibid.

Policy Solutions

New York must act now to address its childhood lead exposure crisis. CDF-NY urges the legislature to invest in the health and wellbeing of the youngest New Yorkers by passing the following bills:

Point of Sale Disclosure | [S. 2142](#) (Kavanagh) / [A. 6608](#) (Rivera)

- Requires residential property owners to test for lead-based paint in their properties before selling or leasing them and to file a report with the New York State Department of Health to better track and address lead poisoning

Lead in School Drinking Water | [S. 2122](#) (Rivera) / [A. 160](#) (Gottfried)

- Requires annual school water testing for lead
- Sets a new action level of 5 parts per billion for lead in school tap water
- When lead concentration exceeds the action level, schools must create and implement an action plan to supply students and staff with safe drinking water

Renovation, Repair and Painting | [A. 7117](#) (Bronson)

- Enables the State to assume administration of home lead-safe renovation, repair and painting (RRP) rules and to conduct training, certification and enforcement of the RRP projects and programs
- Enables the State to collect contractor fees to cover costs and strengthen enforcement
- Estimated to protect 140,000 New York children under the age of six from lead exposure ⁶

Insurance Bill: Lead Poisoning Coverage | [S. 3079](#) (Ryan)

- Ensures that victims of lead poisoning are adequately compensated for medical bills and other expenses and damages related to lead exposure

⁶ "Lead-Safe Renovation, Repair and Painting Activities in New York State: Analysis of the Proposal for State Management of the RRP Rule," Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo, February 2020, https://ppgbuffalo.org/files/documents/lead_rrp_activities_in_nys.pdf.