



Spokane County Head Start/ECEAP/EHS **BLOOD LEAD-LEVEL HANDOUT**

Dear Parents:

Program requirements: For our Head Start Programs to comply with the Federal Head Start Performance Standards, we must ensure that all children receive a lead toxicity screening using a blood test. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) requires all Medicaid-eligible children receive a lead blood test at 12 months and 24 months of age. Children between the ages of 36 to 72 months must also have a screening blood test if one had not been previously conducted.

Parent request: The program is asking parents to request their child's health-care provider do a blood lead test and bring written documentation to verify the test was done at 12 months and 24 months. Children between 36 and 72 months must also have a blood lead test if a test has not been previously conducted.

The program would be glad to assist: If your medical provider will not perform the test, the program will assist you in obtaining the screening from another community resource. Ask your Family Service Coordinator for assistance.

WHY A BLOOD LEAD TEST IS IMPORTANT

Lead exposure is a significant health hazard for young children under the age of six. Estimates based on screenings show that low-income and Medicaid-eligible children are nearly five times more likely to have harmful blood lead levels than the general child population.

Lead, a poisonous metal, contains a toxin that is harmful to the body's nervous system (brain and spinal cord) development of fetuses and developing young children. It is particularly damaging to young children and can affect a child's, brain, kidneys, bone marrow and other body systems as well.

Extremely high levels can result in seizures, coma, even death. Lead poisoning is a serious, yet preventable condition. The best way to detect elevated lead levels is through a blood test.

For additional information regarding lead toxicity screening for Medicaid-eligible children, visit: <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/home/medicaid.asp>. Under **Medicaid** go to the category **Medicaid Consumer Enrollment and Coverage**. Click on **Early and Periodic Screening and Diagnostic Treatment (EPSDT)**. In the next window there is a small box on the left with categories. Click on **EPSDT Benefits** and page down to **Lead Toxicity Screening**.

More information on lead poisoning prevention can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead>.