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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Mandatory Blood Lead Testing

This document contains the questions and answers during and after the webinar “School Data Mandatory Blood Lead Testing”. The Iowa Department of Public Health, Lead Poisoning Prevention Program, conducted this webinar on April 19, 2016.

1. Several children who were in the matching list as “no lead tested” were in fact lead tested. Why this error?

This error may have had occurred because of the following:

- a. Children had a test outside Iowa
 - b. Children had a test in Iowa and it was not imported into Healthy Homes Lead Poisoning Surveillance System (HHLPSS)
 - c. Children had a test and it was reported to HHLPSS, but was under a different name. This is very common in adopted children.
 - d. The match requires an exact match, so the use of nicknames and misspellings could have interfered with the results. (Bob vs Bobby, Tom vs. Thomas will not match)
2. All the enrolled children in my school were found by IDPH as not having a blood lead test result. This is incorrect as I have the lab tests and physicals of many of them. What could have happened?

This year, IDPH discovered an error that occurred with the birthdates data of some school districts. The error happened when importing their birthdates from their Mac-Based Excel spreadsheets. These were different from IDPH matching process by 1461 days. In other words, IDPH works with the 1900 date system and the schools with the 1904 Mac-Based Excel. This error involved eleven school districts that from now on will be treated under this consideration to avoid problems of this type in the future.

3. This year, 30.1% of the children in the school file were not identified as being in your system (HHLPSS), how would you close this gap?

We are currently working with many medical providers and labs to ensure that blood lead tests are electronically reported to the Department. We will be working on clarifying the need to use correct legal names and accurate birthdates to ensure a higher percentage of children matched to our database.

4. Based on these electronic issues, it seems that your system is not 100% accurate. Why would schools continue reporting to you the enrollment of the new kindergartners if chances are that the matching results will not be 100% accurate?

IDPH is statutorily required to execute the Mandatory Blood Lead Testing law. It is our responsibility to make this law work rather than do nothing. We are working on issues we have encountered and are positive about better outcomes for next year.

5. If you are the agency who receives children's lead lab tests across the state, why do you request these from parents after the matching?

Although required, the IDPH does not receive lab results from every single place where lead lab tests are performed, including private clinics. We request a copy of lab results for unmatched children (children for whom we do not have record of a blood lead test in our database) in order to validate the blood lead test and enter the child's information into the database. This also helps IDPH to identify the provider for education and outreach purposes.

6. If schools receive the physicals and lab tests from parents, why would you want parents to send you these documents?

We prefer to get this information from the parents directly due to the HIPPA requirements.

7. Our school does not request lab tests to parents to register their kindergartners early in the year. What would you recommend us to do?

Ideally, you should start requesting these lab tests as soon as the students are registered early in the year. If this is not possible, request the lab tests at the starting date of the school year. According to the law, within 60 days after the start of the school calendar, IDPH should receive an electronic list of the children enrolled in kindergarten by the schools.

8. Our school collects physicals and you have been accepting them. Wouldn't this be a HIPPA violation?

The Department may have been in error in collecting physicals. We have now shredded or deleted all copies of physicals. All that we are requesting is that the schools indicate to the parent that we did not have a record of their child's blood lead test in our electronic database. It is then up to the parents to verify the testing and then send us a lab result if they can obtain it.

9. Where does the law say that the school nurses have to report the enrollment of kindergartners or to follow up with the children who haven't had a blood lead test?

641—67.10(135) states: "The board of directors of each school district and the authorities in charge of each nonpublic school shall, in collaboration with the department, ensure that each applicant and transfer student complies with the blood lead testing requirement according to sub rule 67.6(1) or has a valid certificate of blood lead testing exemption on file."

We continue communicating with school nurses because of the long time partnership with them. However, each school district is welcome to choose their personnel to work on the mandatory blood lead testing.

10. We sent you a significant number of our kindergartners' lab tests, what are you planning to do with them?

We will verify if the laboratories or private clinics reported the lead lab tests to IDPH. If they didn't, we will enter the information in our data base and will be in touch with them. If they did, we will investigate if the legal name of the child changed, or the child's name was entered incorrectly or if an error occurred in our system. If an error occurred, we will find out the reasons and will use this knowledge to avoid more problems in the near future.

11. What options do parents have if they believe their children don't need a lead test or can't have a lead test?

To determine if a child doesn't need a lead test, the parent must call Stu Schmitz at (515) 281-8707. He will ask the parent several questions and depending on the information provided, Schmitz might issue a low risk lead test exemption. The only other reason why a child can't have a lead test is because of a religious belief from the parent. They must fill out a religious exemption and submit it to the school. This document can be downloading from <http://idph.iowa.gov/lpp/blood-lead-testing>

12. Why does this law require kindergartners to be lead tested when they should have been tested earlier?

The law also promotes early testing of children. The Mandatory Testing law (IAC 641 67.6(2)) states "A parent or guardian of a child under two years of age is strongly encouraged to have the child tested for elevated blood lead levels by the time that the child reaches two years of age." IDPH recommends and promotes testing as early as 12 months for all children.

13. How many blood lead tests does the child need to have at the age of six?

At least one blood lead test.

14. How would the 2016-2017 kindergartners solicited data would be different and better from the past years?

We have been paying close attention to the problems encountered in the gathering of data in the past two years. So, this next year, we simplified the data entering process. The Excel spreadsheet will have less columns to be filled out which will impact positively the accuracy of the data and timely submission.

15. The Department of Education is working with other IDPH's programs such as immunizations, oral health and visual screening. The reporting has been automatized in such way that there is no need for school nurses to enter data. Why wouldn't IDPH do similar with the mandatory blood lead testing?

We are not financially able to pay for a database different from what we have due to recent federal funding cuts. The lead surveillance database was provided to IDPH free of charge from CDC and does not interface with databases in other IDPH programs.

16. This year, 30.1% of the children in the school file were not identified as being in your system (HHLPSS), how would you close this gap?

We are currently working with many medical providers and labs to ensure that blood lead tests are electronically reported to the Department. We will be working on clarifying the need to use correct legal names and accurate birthdates to ensure a higher percentage of children matched to our database.

17. How about if there were schools who decide to not collaborate or partially collaborate with IDPH in the implementation of this law?

The law requires that all schools collaborate and cooperate fully with the Department.

18. How would you know that everybody knows what to do or it is supposed to do regarding this law?

The Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program is planning to hold several regional meetings with health care providers, school health personnel, board of directors of each school district, local childhood lead poisoning prevention programs, local child health centers, and local public health agencies. More detailed information on these regional meetings will be provided in the near future.

19. Would school nurses receive CEU's for these trainings?

We have initiated the conversation in this regards, and expect positive outcomes.

20. Does the Mandatory Blood Lead Testing have any type of enforcement?

This law has limited enforcement due to limited staffing in the IDPH Lead Poisoning Prevention Program. The IDPH does not penalize parents for not having their children tested; and schools do not penalize children for not having a blood lead test prior to 6 years of age.

The purpose of this law is "to improve the health of Iowa's children" with the support of all stakeholders of this process.

21. Where can we find more information on lead?

Visit the Lead Program website at <http://idph.iowa.gov/lpp/blood-lead-testing> for more information on lead. Or call our toll free line at 1-800-972-2026.

For specific information about the Blood Lead Testing program requirements contact Rossany Brugger, (515) 281-3225 or Stu Schmitz, (515) 281-8707.