



New York State Association of School Nurses

www.nysasn.org

The New York State Association of School Nurses (NYSASN) represents Registered Professional School Nurses throughout New York State. On behalf of the students and parents we serve, NYSASN issues this Memorandum of Support for the efforts of the Coalition to Prevent Lead Poisoning in obtaining school access to lead level data on the New York State Immunization Information System (NYSIIS). Schools do not currently have access to student lead data on NYSIIS, as they do immunization records.

Children are commonly exposed to lead in their environment with the primary source of lead being the child's home. We are now aware that lead exposure has also been happening through tap water or from lead leaking from aging plumbing infrastructure throughout the country. National policies, begun in the 1970s, ensuring lead-free paint, gasoline, toys, jewelry and other materials have significantly reduced the scope of lead poisoning among children. Lead in tap water could roll back that success.¹

"...Early exposure to lead affects central nervous system substrates and behaviors that are best measured in the older child, adolescent, and young adult. This lag may be the result of toxicological processes in which some period of time is required for past lead exposure to affect central nervous system function. Another explanation is that lead may primarily affect higher order neurodevelopmental processes that are best tested or only measureable at later ages when children's response modalities are more highly differentiated." The behavioral or cognitive consequences of lead exposure during toddler years may not be evident until after the child starts school. Lead data from NYSIIS is an added tool that school nurses can use to help identify students at risk and to present as a possible cause if cognitive or behavioral issues arise. If a student is noted to have a history of lead level at 5 mcg/dL or above, schools can ask parents for healthcare provider follow-up that may include retesting, developmental assessments or surveillance. The school nurse can ensure that each teacher of the lead affected child carefully monitor the student for learning and behavioral problems that may arise. Referrals could be made for neuropsychological testing.²

NYSASN supports amending NYS Public Health Law to allow school health professionals access to students' lead data in NYSIIS. This information will help the parents and school community to provide

¹ Brookes, L. Lessons From Flint: What Should Clinicians Do About Lead Now?

<http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/860330> Accessed. Accessed March 17, 2016.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Educational Interventions for Children Affected by Lead, 2015. http://cdc.gov/nceh/lead/publications/educational_interventions_children_affected_by_lead.pdf. Accessed March 20, 2016.

earlier assessment and initiation of educational interventions, when necessary, for students affected by lead. Assisting parents and guardians in obtaining necessary follow up with healthcare providers as needed will help more students reach their learning potential. Together we can eliminate this preventable achievement barrier.

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