

# 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 state<sup>1</sup> and with childhood lead poisoning cases on the rise due to collateral effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>2</sup> 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

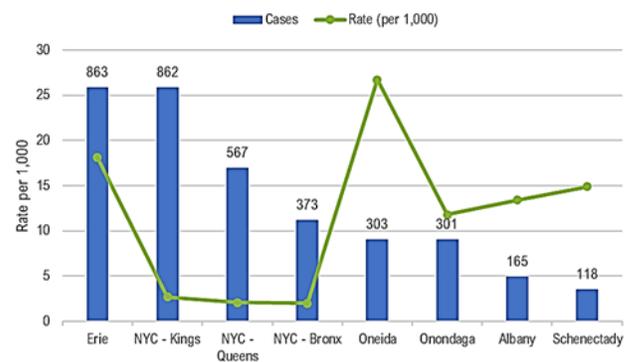
There is no safe level of lead in children.

- 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.<sup>3</sup>
- **28,820 New York children** born in 2019 (12 percent of births) have blood lead levels greater than 2 micrograms per deciliter ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ ).<sup>4</sup>

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.<sup>5</sup>

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.

<sup>1</sup>"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>

<sup>2</sup>"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>.

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

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

<sup>5</sup> 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<sup>6</sup>

### 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

<sup>6</sup> "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](https://ppgbuffalo.org/files/documents/lead_rrp_activities_in_nys.pdf).