

# Louisville Lead-Free Community

## Background

Lead exposure in children is a serious avoidable environmental health problem. Lead poisoning is the most common environmental health threat to children in the United States and can severely impact a child’s behavioral and neurological development. Prolonged lead exposure can put one at a higher risk for high blood pressure, heart disease, kidney disease, and reduced fertility. Overall, more lead exposure leads to more harm for children and there is still no known safe blood lead level in children.

In Louisville, Kentucky’s largest city, the major source of lead exposure among children is lead-based paint and lead-contaminated dust found in buildings built before 1978. Children often ingest lead through breathing or ingesting dust on their hands or toys. Hazardous community lead exposure occurs because of decades of leaded gas emissions, lead paint in older



homes, as well as lead-contaminated soil and water in some areas of Louisville. These risks are heightened in historically Black and lower income neighborhoods of Louisville.<sup>1</sup>

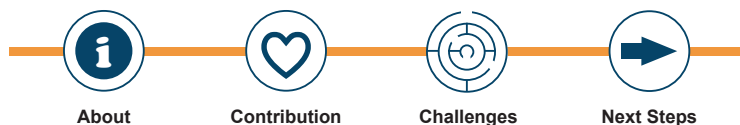
## About NLAPH’s Lead-Free Communities Initiative

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) is working to eliminate children’s exposure to lead across the nation. Since the early 1990’s, CDC has funded more than 60 state and local childhood lead prevention programs in implementing lead prevention strategies. In 2020, CDC funded NLAPH to design a program track where teams working on advancing their lead-free goals could advance leadership skills, collaboratively learn, and share success stories related to creating lead-free communities.

NLAPH is operated by the Public Health Institute’s Center for Health Leadership and Practice (CHLP) and funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). NLAPH’s goal is to support leaders in addressing complex public health issues in their communities, and to help them build essential skills for tackling these issues.

The Louisville Lead-Free Community team was selected as one of the teams focusing on lead-free strategies and participated in both NLAPH’s leadership academy and the Lead-Free Communities Pilot Program. The Lead-Free Communities Initiative provided opportunities for content-specific coaching, technical assistance, and peer learning.

This case study summarizes data collected about the Louisville Lead-Free Community’s work and the impact of the Lead-free communities learning collaborative facilitated by NLAPH. Data that was collected for this case study included: team coordinator interviews, community partner interviews, NLAPH pre/post participant and team surveys, observation of lead-free learning group calls, and document review of program materials.



<sup>1</sup> Kentucky’s Childhood Lead Poisoning Targeted Screening Plan. (2006, February). Retrieved from <https://chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dph/dmch/cfhb/CLPPP/KYLeadTargetedScreeningPlan.pdf>

## About the Louisville Lead-Free Community Team

The Louisville Lead-Free Community Team joined NLAPH with a focus on implementing lead-free strategies, starting with one high-need neighborhood, Smoketown, and learning from and spreading successful strategies to other zip codes where there was need.

The Louisville Lead-Free Community Team was comprised of collaboration from these key partners:

- » Local public health department Louisville Metro Department of Public Health and Wellness
- » University/higher education
- » Arts-based organization
- » Community development organization
- » Local youth-serving organizations
- » Regional water company
- » Local government/metro council
- » Community residents



The Louisville Lead-Free Community team identified several goals to achieve through participating in NLAPH. Members of this team worked on the following:

- » **Strategic Planning** – The team developed a 5-year plan that will guide the work of their multi-sector team.
- » **Communications and outreach strategy** – The team created a communication strategy for informing community members, homeowners, and parents about resources available to reduce lead exposure. As part of this communications strategy, the team participated in outreach events and other opportunities to engage community residents in the development of a childhood lead-poisoning prevention campaign for the community. They were able to launch [campaign ads](#) in the Smoketown community that informed community members about lead prevention and reflected the residents and voices of those living in the Smoketown community.
- » **Hazard Mapping** – Reducing lead exposure and increasing testing requires an understanding of the largest sources of child lead exposure in the community and where people face a higher chance of being exposed to lead.<sup>2</sup> The Louisville Lead-Free Community team partnered on lead hazard mapping across different communities in Louisville. This included garnering funding and staffing to conduct the hazard map as well as a plan to communicate the results to communities.
- » **Removal of Lead** – The team prioritized ensuring community access to lead abatement services as a key strategy to eliminate childhood lead poisoning. The team identified available resources and ensured that those who need lead abatement services received relevant information.

*“The goal of the initiative is to encourage and assist communities in becoming places where hazardous sources of lead in the environment are eliminated.”*

<sup>2</sup> Lead Free NC. (n.d.) Retrieved from <https://leadfreenc.org/prevention/lead-map/>

## Contribution of NLAPH

When reflecting on the progress they made over the program year, Louisville Lead-free Community team indicated that NLAPH had helped them advance their project goals and would have a lasting impact on their team and how they approach the work. In particular:



- » Having **dedicated time and accountability** helped them to develop their 5-year plan for multiple components of the work they hope to see happen in the communities they serve.



- » **Network mapping activities** prompted them to conduct a stakeholder analysis to identify what partners were not yet engaged. They were then able to engage and empower some key community partners to help advance lead-free work in Louisville.



- » **Reflecting on their strategies** as part of the program, the team began considering other ways they could reduce lead exposure. This resulted in them beginning to develop **local policy recommendations** that could be implemented in Louisville. As one team member explained,

*"We have developed both policy recommendations and budget proposals to expand the lead program through Louisville's American Recover Plan (ARP) funding. We've submitted those proposals to the City Council and are waiting to see where those land."*

## Challenges to engaging in NLAPH and advancing their work

The Louisville Lead-free Community team participated in NLAPH during COVID-19 response, which exasperated many of the challenges that are typically faced in advancing complex, multi-stakeholder community priorities. The most significant challenges the team highlighted included:

- » **Prioritizing multiple goals/areas of lead prevention work** – Given the high need and multiple priority areas to address lead poisoning in communities, team members found it challenging to prioritize and address multiple areas of focus at the same time.
- » **Securing funding** – Full implementation of the program required funding, in particular to support lead abatement for participating residents.
- » **Dedicating time to project** – Individual team members were balancing their job responsibilities with advancing the work of the coalition. Responding to COVID-19 added additional stress on individual team members' capacity.
- » **Virtual engagement of partners** – Team members struggled to engage partners and conduct outreach in a mostly virtual environment during the COVID-19 pandemic.



## Next Steps for the Louisville Lead-Free Community Team:

Going forward, the Louisville Lead-Free Community team plans to continue to work collaboratively with their partners to advance their priorities to eliminate lead exposure in their community. In particular, they are exploring funding to secure a student workforce to continue to maintain the lead hazard surveying and mapping information. They are also continuing to assess how and where community residents seek out information to ensure those who need access to lead-prevention tools and resources can access them. They created a foundation for the work forward, knowing that this work will take years to reach impact. There is still high engagement with the National Center for Environment Health (NCEH). They felt that what they learned in NLAPH would continue to benefit their work and plan on continuing to engage in NLAPH and program resources through the alumni portal.



## For more information about NLAPH

### NLAPH Program

Program website:  
[www.healthleadership.org/program\\_nlaph](http://www.healthleadership.org/program_nlaph)

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