

**State of New Jersey  
Department of the Public Advocate  
240 W. State St.  
Trenton, NJ 08625**

**Jon S. Corzine**  
Governor

**Ronald K. Chen**  
Public Advocate

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**Contact:**  
Laurie Brewer  
609-826-5054  
609-417-0038  
William Reyes  
908-820-4124

**PRESS RELEASE**

**City of Elizabeth signs “Model Lead-Safe City” agreement  
with Public Advocate**

*First northern NJ city to announce aggressive actions to prevent childhood lead poisoning*

**ELIZABETH** –The City of Elizabeth has signed a landmark agreement with the New Jersey Public Advocate to aggressively respond to and prevent the problem of childhood lead poisoning.

“With studies showing that even low amounts of lead in children can cause long term health problems we need to do more to remove lead from our housing stock,” stated Mayor Chris Bollwage. “We want to thank the NJ Public Advocate Office and all our lead awareness partners who are so committed to removing lead and helping families stay healthy.”

Flanked by local families who have experienced the childhood poisoning problem, New Jersey Public Advocate Ronald K. Chen, Assemblyman Joe Cryan and City Mayor J. Christian Bollwage signed an agreement designating Elizabeth as a “Model Lead-Safe City.”

“The City of Elizabeth is to be commended for taking such an aggressive stance against childhood lead poisoning,” said Chen, who unveiled a report in April that showed that thousands of children in New Jersey are poisoned in their homes every year due to exposure to deteriorating lead-based paint. “

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According to the Public Advocate's report, the childhood lead poisoning problem was determined to be particularly acute in the state's major cities. In response to the report, Governor Jon S. Corzine has signed an executive order requiring state departments to tighten their lead poisoning prevention activities.

There were about 11,000 children under the age of six in Elizabeth in State Fiscal Year 2006 and the city is home to 5.45 percent of all lead-burdened children under age six statewide.

In addition, about 80 percent of the city's housing was built before 1978, when the national ban on the sale of lead paint went into effect, and about 43 percent of the housing in the city was built before 1950 when the level of lead in paint was at its highest.

Under the Model Lead-Safe City agreement signed today, city officials committed to take steps to: improve educational outreach on the issue; expand the number of children screened for lead poisoning; improve the inspections of properties that may be lead-burdened; tighten oversight of lead abatement contractors; and provide improved relocation assistance and more lead-safe housing to affected families.

Specifically, the city will:

- Dispatch a lead inspector to a home within 48 hours after a child has been identified as lead poisoned.
- Will investigate cross-training city code enforcement officers to become state-licensed lead inspectors.
- Better publicize existing lead screening activities including those available at the city's weekly Lead Clinic, Immunization Clinic and Baby Keep-Well Stations and Child Health Clinics.
- Designate a Lead-Safe City Coordinator who will head up all efforts related to responding to and preventing lead poisoning;
- Hold monthly case management meetings to review all cases of lead poisoned children in the city,
- Require that developers who obtain financial assistance through the Elizabeth Home Improvement Programs to renovate structures built before 1978 use contractors certified in lead-safe work practices, or use lead-abatement contractors, as needed.
- Require that all people living in a multi-unit dwelling be notified if a child who lives there is diagnosed with lead poisoning;
- Investigate the possibility of amending local ordinances so that a lead-safe certificate becomes a pre-condition for obtaining a certificate of occupancy.
- Tighten oversight of lead abatement contractors and take steps to survey homeowner satisfaction with abatement contractors;
- Update its landlord registration file and crackdown on landlords that fail to remediate their properties;
- Apply for federal grants to support increased lead screening, home inspections and abatements, and family relocations.

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The New Jersey Department of the Public Advocate conducted a field investigation late last year in five of the New Jersey cities with the highest concentration of lead-poisoned children: Trenton, Camden, Newark, East Orange and Irvington. Together, these five cities accounted for 31 percent of all reported lead poisonings in New Jersey in FY 2005.

At each of the 104 addresses inspected, one or more children had already been lead poisoned within the past 10 years, and thus were or should have been inspected. Additionally, a minimum of approximately one-third of the homes had already undergone an abatement. DPA took up to 12 samples in each of the homes of the floors, window sills and window wells.

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