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LEAD POISONING PREVENTION INITIATIVE

In 1995, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) conducted door-to-door blood lead testing in northeast Denver. The study found that over 16% of children in these neighborhoods were lead poisoned (blood lead levels over 10 µg/dL). This is over five times the incidence of childhood lead poisoning found in Denver County as a whole. Over 90% of the participants in the CDPHE door-to-door lead testing were Hispanic or Black, and approximately 80% of the homes were occupied by low-income households. This pocket of low income and minority children with a significantly higher than average incidence of lead poisoning than Denver as a whole, is consistent with EPA findings that lead poisoning is an environmental justice issue.

NDHC, in conjunction with the City and County of Denver and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, is undertaking a lead poisoning prevention initiative to address this environmental justice issue. Using grant funds from HUD, NDHC will make 70 homes lead-safe through renovation. Also under this initiative, approximately 250 children will be tested for blood lead levels, 15 individuals will be trained to be lead risk assessors, or lead contractor supervisors, and 8 community educational meetings will be held in northeast Denver.

The seventy homes that will undergo lead hazard reduction renovations will be referred to the initiative in three ways. Approximately twenty homes will be identified through NDHC's acquisition rehabilitation program. These homes will be vacant at the time of lead hazard reduction and will become part of NDHC's affordable homeownership, affordable rental, or transitional housing programs. The homes will be held on NDHC's lead-safe registry and priority will be given to families with children under the age of six. Approximately twenty homes will be identified through the Denver Urban Renewal Authority's (DURA) low-income homeowner rehabilitation program. DURA will refer homes to NDHC if they meet the criteria of having been built before 1978 and a child 6 years or younger living or frequenting the home. Finally, approximately 30 homes will be referred to the program by Medicare, CDPHE, or other medical services when a child is found to have blood lead level elevated to 10 µg/dL or higher.