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## **NEVADA STATE HEALTH DIVISION NEWS RELEASE**

### **NATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH WEEK**

#### **LEAD SCREENING**

*Partners working together, making a difference*

*Carson City* – Nevada has been screening children for lead poisoning. Southern Nevada Health District (SNHD), the University of Las Vegas (UNLV) School of Community Health Sciences and Nevada State Health Division's Frontier and Rural Health Program, have concentrated efforts on children under the age of six and at greatest risk for the long term effects of elevated blood lead levels.

In 2006 SNHD received a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to develop the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program (CLPPP). The health district partners with UNLV's Nevada Center for Environmental and Health Surveillance and includes screening children, investigation of environments of children identified with elevated lead levels, assessment of lead levels in local residences, protocol development and testing of environmental samples for lead in homes and surrounding environments. Research conducted by the team led to the removal of lead-tainted candies from store shelves in Southern Nevada in 2007.

"This is a wonderful example of 'prevention in action' by the health district," said Dr. Mary Guinan, State Health Officer. "Lead poisoning can cause many problems in young children, such as learning disabilities, behavioral problems, and, at very high levels, seizures, coma, and even death," she explained. "We need to ensure that children in Nevada are provided screening opportunities so that, if there is a child with high blood lead levels, that child can receive the appropriate treatment and prevention. Prevention involves identifying and removing lead containing objects from the child's environment."

The State Health Division's Frontier and Rural Health Program (FaR) provides public health services in 14 counties which include Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT), the child health component of Medicaid. This program is designed to detect and treat health problems early through regular medical, dental, vision and hearing screenings, lead testing and immunizations. Children identified with elevated lead levels are followed closely to ensure that the prevention measures implemented are working. FaR staff work collaboratively with the Southern Nevada Health District CLPPP program.

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*NEVADA STATE IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER*

“The Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program has provided the Southern Nevada Health District with a unique opportunity working with community partners to address a highly preventable health problem for children. We have been able to measure lead levels in homes, toys, childcare centers and even products like imported candies,” said Dr. Lawrence Sands, Southern Nevada Health District chief health officer. “In 2008, our team received more than 13,000 blood lead levels for children under the age of 18, 25 percent of whom showed lead exposure. By testing children’s lead levels, we can identify sources of lead exposure throughout our community and eliminate them.”

According to the US Environmental Protection Agency, approximately 310,000 U.S. children, aged one to five years have elevated blood lead levels.

Historically, childhood lead exposure was linked to paint, but more recently many other factors in the environment have been identified as sources of lead poisoning in children including old or antique furniture, vinyl products, such as mini-blinds and telephone cords, imported candy, painted toys, lead glazed ceramic ware, pottery, leaded crystal, keys, and lead contaminated soil.

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