

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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**GOVERNOR PATERSON ISSUES EXECUTIVE ORDER 21
ESTABLISHING THE GOVERNOR'S TASK FORCE ON THE
PREVENTION OF CHILDHOOD LEAD POISONING**

***State Agencies Will Collaborate on the Development of a Coordinated
Strategy to Eradicate Childhood Exposure to Lead***

Governor David A. Paterson today announced the creation of the Governor's Task Force on the Prevention of Childhood Lead Poisoning to further the State's efforts to eliminate childhood lead poisoning. The Task Force will bring together a variety of State agencies to make findings and recommendations for the development and implementation of a coordinated strategy to reduce childhood exposure to lead.

Increases in funding over the last few years – including in this year's budget – have allowed the State to target lead poisoning prevention activities to communities where children face the greatest risk of exposure to lead-based paint. While screening and testing children for lead poisoning and then providing treatment to those with elevated blood lead levels will continue to be vital components of the State's public health efforts, Governor Paterson's new Task Force will advance an even more aggressive prevention strategy.

"As I said in October, when New York's fiscal crisis forced me to veto a worthy bill that I had sponsored years ago, lead poisoning is a scourge that has plagued and destroyed the lives of too many children, the vast majority of whom live lives deprived in too many ways. I am committed to eradicating lead poisoning in New York State, and with the creation of this task force, our public health efforts will now focus on prevention," said Governor Paterson. "I will now give those children a voice through this task force. I have been a vocal proponent for addressing this issue for more than two decades. Responding to this plague is and should be an obligation for everyone in government."

In 2007 and 2008, State funding for lead programs was almost doubled and a pilot program known as the Childhood Lead Poisoning Primary Prevention Program (CLPPPP) was implemented. Under that program, the Department of Health (DOH) works with city and county health officials to target primary prevention activities to children living in areas at high risk for exposure to lead-based paint. In October 2008, Governor Paterson pledged to intensify the State's efforts to address the problem of childhood lead poisoning even further. The 2009-10 enacted budget included the Governor's proposals to add \$2.5 million more funding for the CLPPPP, for a total of \$15.6 million over a three-year period, and made the program permanent.

Childhood lead poisoning is primarily caused by exposure to lead-based paint

and lead-based paint dust in housing built before 1978. Lead poisoning can have severe and irreversible consequences on childhood growth and development, and disproportionately impacts affects low-income and minority children.

Governor Paterson also announced that in addition to creating the Task Force and increasing funding for the CLPPPP, his administration has taken additional actions to address lead poisoning:

- Legislation proposed in the Governor's Executive Budget and included in the enacted budget links the statewide immunization registry and the statewide registry of children with elevated blood lead levels, promoting timely lead screening by practitioners and improving DOH's ability to survey screening rates.
- DOH released a report showing that in 2006-07, childhood lead poisoning fell by 17 percent in Upstate New York since 2005 and that testing rates have increased over the last several years, providing valuable feedback to guide future prevention efforts.
- DOH revised its regulations so that comprehensive follow-up interventions for children are triggered when a child has a blood lead level of 15 micrograms per deciliter (mcg/dL), instead of the previous level of 20 mcg/dL.

In making its recommendations, the Task Force will consider matters such as how to maximize available State resources for the purpose of State and local primary prevention activities designed to reduce childhood exposure to lead, as well as the need to partner with county and local governments in such efforts. Particular attention will be paid to housing issues, as the Task Force will consider questions such as whether feasible measures exist to ensure that public housing is free of lead-based paint hazards prior to occupancy by children child under six years of age, and how to ensure that housing renovations performed with public funding include lead-based paint hazard remediation. The Task Force will also examine potential sources of funding or revenue, such as Federal grants, that can be used to help fund State and local primary prevention activities aimed at eliminating childhood lead poisoning.

The Task Force will issue a preliminary report by November 30, 2009 and a final report on or before November 30, 2010.

The Task Force will be chaired by First Deputy Secretary to the Governor Val Grey, and the Governor's Deputy Secretary for Health and Human Services will serve as the Vice-Chair. Members of the Task Force will include the Governor's Deputy Secretaries for the Environment, Economic Development and Housing, Labor and Financial Regulation, and Energy as well as the Counsel to the Governor and representatives from the following State

agencies: DOH; the Division of Housing and Community Renewal; the Housing Finance Agency; the Department of State; the Department of Environmental Conservation; the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance; the Office of Children and Family Services; the Council on Children and Families; the Insurance Department; the Department of Taxation and Finance; the Department of Labor; the Empire State Development Corporation and the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority. In carrying out its responsibilities, the Task Force will consult with stakeholders such as advocacy organizations, scientific and academic institutions, professional medical associations, and local governments.

Information on childhood lead poisoning and the CLPPPP is available on DOH's website at <http://www.health.state.ny.us/environmental/lead>.

The following quotes provided in support of the Governor's Task Force on the Prevention of Childhood Lead Poisoning.

Senate Health Committee Chair Thomas K. Duane said: "I share Governor Paterson's commitment to combating childhood lead poisoning and thank him for his leadership in this effort. We know that more needs to be done to prevent childhood exposure to lead and the Governor's Task Force will enable New York to implement a coordinated strategy to do so."

Senator Neil Breslin said: "Timely lead screenings are critical in detecting and treating dangerous levels of lead in children. I applaud the Governor for creating this task force and giving this serious health risk the attention it deserves."

Senator Liz Krueger said: "I applaud the Governor for establishing a Task Force on the Prevention of Childhood Lead Poisoning. We need to protect young children who are especially vulnerable to the health risks created by lead paint and dust."

Senator Bill Perkins said: "For the children in the communities affected by lead poisoning the success of this task force will improve their educational outcomes, and their overall health and living conditions. Its formation is a step in the right direction toward overcoming this public health problem and its crippling effects on our children and our community. This kind of leadership on the part of our state and government agencies will move New York State forward on the path to eradicating this preventable and devastating disease."

Senator Bill Stachowski said: "Exposure to lead is extremely dangerous to children. Approximately 900,000 preschool children in this country are currently lead poisoned. If lead gets into a child's body, it could cause a lower IQ, kidney damage, hearing loss, growth problems, anemia, and

behavior and memory problems. I am very pleased that the Governor has called for the creation of this important task force. It will ultimately save many children's lives."

Senator Antoine M. Thompson said: "I commend Governor Paterson for creating the Task Force on the Prevention of Childhood Lead Poisoning. Lead poisoning is a crucial matter that needs to be addressed and hopefully one day the worry will be eliminated."

Senator David Valesky said: "The health and safety of our children will always be a high priority. As evidenced by the successes of Upstate programs focused on prevention, proactive measures are a clear way to reduce lead poisoning risks to our children. I am pleased that the Governor has created the Task Force on the Prevention of Childhood Lead Poisoning to continue to address this issue."

Assembly Health Committee Chair Richard N. Gottfried said, "Some things can't wait. Lead poisoning robs children of their health and intellectual potential. Governor Paterson and the Legislature have stepped up New York's work to end lead poisoning. The task force will help focus and strengthen that work."

Assembly Housing Committee Chair Vito Lopez said: "Lead-based paints pose the risk of severe and irreversible health problems for young children who come in contact with these substances. Sadly, it is the walls and ceilings in the homes of many needy children that put them in direct exposure to lead poisoning. In order to address this troubling issue, we must ensure that housing units do not still contain these dangerous paint products. The Task Force on the Prevention of Lead Poisoning is important towards reaching this end. New York must protect children from the serious health problems caused by lead-based paints."

Assemblyman Richard Brodsky said, "Lead poisoning can have serious and irreversible effects on a child's growth and development. This is another significant step in long struggle to protect our children from harmful exposure to lead-based paints and the serious health problems they can cause."

Assemblywoman Barbara Clark said: "For young children, lead poisoning can have long-term negative effects. This new initiative will target detection and prevention to continue public health efforts and reduce childhood lead poisoning."

Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz said: "Children in low-income households throughout the state are still at serious risk from these toxic products, which were used decades ago but still pose a threat. The creation of this task force is an important step towards reducing exposure to lead-based paint. I welcome the input it will produce in helping communities safeguard kids

against contact with these paints.”

Assemblymember Steve Englebright said: “I am pleased to hear that Governor Paterson has created a comprehensive approach to eliminate childhood lead poisoning. I look forward to working with the Governor’s Task Force to eliminate a broad array of lead-exposure pathways that have for too long adversely affected our children and their families.”

Assemblyman David Gantt said: “I am pleased that this year we are able to go forward with a task force to address the disturbing incidence of lead poisoning. With the findings of this investigative body, New York will be better positioned to work towards protecting children from contact with these hazardous products which were discontinued long ago.”

Assemblyman Hakeem Jeffries said: “The dangers of lead poisoning are very real, yet preventable through education. This task force will allow preventative measures to be put in place so we can continue to reduce the number of children who suffer the ill-effects of lead poisoning.”

Assemblyman John J. McEneny said: “Although the use of lead-based paints ceased more than three decades ago, the problems it causes are still with us today. Lead paint remains on the walls in households and buildings in low-income neighborhoods across the state, putting children at risk for severe neurological problems including learning disabilities. The task force will help New York draft a plan to reduce the exposure of children to this paint.”

Assemblyman Joseph Morelle said: “This lead poisoning prevention initiative will work with local communities to establish a more aggressive outreach strategy. The Governor’s task force will address this very serious issue at a local level by providing guidance to our communities and focusing public health efforts where they are needed most.”

Assemblywoman Crystal D. Peoples said: “I am hopeful that this task force will provide important input to local governments and health agencies on how to mitigate and eventually eradicate lead poisoning here in New York. This disease is completely preventable. Lead-based paints are a public health threat and contribute to the increasing cost of public education. The task force can gain valuable information from advocates who have worked to prevent lead poisoning.”

Assemblyman William Scarborough said: “Years of study have shown that lead-based paint is the culprit behind numerous neurological and blood-based disorders. Unfortunately, despite the widespread discontinuation of these products children – who are most prone to lead poisoning – are still becoming ill from it due in part because of the lack of a comprehensive remediation plan. It is my hope that this task force will give New York direction on how to prevent lead poisoning in low-income communities where it most often occurs.”

Assemblyman Darryl Towns said: "As an assemblyman and father it is crucial to me that we keep our children safe from lead poisoning. This task force, created by Governor Paterson, will further our efforts to prevent future exposure to our communities across the state."

Dr. Henry Schaeffer, President of the American Academy of Pediatrics, District II, said: "Pediatricians across New York applaud Governor Paterson's Executive Order creating an Interagency Task Force on the Prevention of Childhood Lead Poisoning. We look forward to working with Commissioner Daines and Commissioner VanAmerongen and their staffs in a targeted, but statewide effort to help pediatricians and families eradicate lead poisoning in all New York State communities. The children in New York deserve lead free living and learning environments to grow and develop to their full potential. Working together, we can make lead poisoning a thing of the past."

Dr. David Broadbent, MD, MPH, co-chair of the Coalition to End Lead Poisoning in New York State and a member of the Governor's Advisory Council on Childhood Lead Poisoning, said: "The Coalition to End Lead Poisoning in New York State *is* encouraged that the number of newly lead poisoned children in the state continues to decline and that the Governor is focusing on creative ways to eradicate this pernicious problem."

Michael Hanley, a Senior Attorney in the Rochester office of the Empire Justice Center, said: "The creation of the Interagency Task Force today by Governor Paterson takes a critical step toward protecting the children who live in the predominantly low income and minority neighborhoods where lead poisoning rates remain disturbingly high. We know from many studies on the subject, that targeting the state's resources through this type of coordination will ultimately save hundreds of millions of dollars in reduced educational, criminal justice, and medical expenses and will increase revenues by increasing the earning capacity of the children we protect."

David T. Hannan, MD, MPA, President of the Medical Society of the State of New York said: "Lead poisoning in children is a devastating issue that must be addressed. Governor David Paterson has taken the initiative in issuing an executive order to create an Interagency Task Force on the Prevention of Childhood Lead Poisoning, an action that the Medical Society applauds as an important step in identifying the scope of the problem. We must begin to take steps to address this very serious problem. Fetal injuries from lead poisoning can occur if women have elevated blood levels during pregnancy. Many cases of lead toxicity have been identified by screening and we need the Task Force to make recommendations regarding prevention. MSSNY will be happy to work with the Task Force on prevention of childhood lead poisoning. Governor Paterson has recognized the severity of lead poisoning in children and has acted to prevent it. The Medical Society of the State of New York applauds his efforts."

Cordell Cleare, chair of the New York City Coalition to End Lead Poisoning, said: "Nearly four decades ago when the State Legislature enacted New York's first lead poisoning prevention law, it recognized that 'Lead poisoning is a disease which will require the concerted efforts of public health agencies and other agencies concerned with the availability of healthful housing for the people of our state before the disease can be brought under control and its incidence reduced.' Governor Paterson's bold action today will finally bring to bear the coordination of state agencies that has been so long overdue."

Russ Haven, Legislative Counsel for the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG), said: "The lead poisoning problem cuts across many lines, including housing, health, education, juvenile and criminal justice, the environment and economic development—and that's why we need a multi-agency, multi-disciplinary approach. Governor Paterson's creation of childhood lead poisoning prevention task force promises to open a new front in the battle against childhood lead poisoning, tapping the synergies from the collective action of state agencies and authorities to end this epidemic."

Martha Pofit, Executive Director of the New York State Public Health Association said: "The New York State Public Health Association applauds the Governor for taking the next step in mounting a full-fledged attack on lead poisoning. When coupled with investments in the Administration's budget, the creation of the Inter-Agency Task Force will go a long way in reducing lead poisoning for children, seniors and families living in poverty. Public health professionals throughout NYS welcome this opportunity to partner with the government in achieving a measurable reduction in lead poisoning statewide."