

Michigan Department of Health and Human Services: Partnering for New Opportunities

An AMCHP MCEH CoIIN Success Story

Lead exposure remains one of the greatest public health issues in the United States due to the detrimental health effects on children, including unborn children. Lead can be detected in pregnant women's plasma and breast milk and can cross the placental barrier. Children are particularly vulnerable to lead exposure due to the susceptibility of their developing organ systems. Children exposed to lead before birth or shortly after are at increased risk of neurodevelopmental challenges including lower IQ, difficulty concentrating, and inability to control emotions.

Siloes & Ineffective Policy

Michigan has recognized lead exposure as an important public health concern for some time and has taken important steps to address this issue. Statewide laws around lead and copper use have been strengthened. Multiple state groups have convened to prioritize and address issues related to lead. The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) has had an established lead program for several years. This program has direct access to epidemiologists, data professionals, scientists, and toxicologists, enabling a data-driven approach within the program. Despite this, the program has experienced challenges with siloed work and making effective policy changes. MDHHS identified a need to form new partnerships and engage with the community to overcome these challenges.

To develop these partnerships and engagement opportunities, MDHHS participated in the Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs (AMCHP) Maternal and Child Environmental Health (MCEH) Collaborative Improvement and Innovation Network (CoIIN). This initiative aims to build state capacity to increase the number of infants and children who have access to a system of coordinated care to address their needs related to lead exposure, with the ultimate goal of decreasing maternal and child morbidity and mortality associated with exposure. Participation in the CoIIN allowed MDHHS to develop partnerships with other organizations and create a larger statewide collaborative network of lead programs.

Increased Family Engagement & New Partnerships

A key partnership that MDHHS developed through the CoIIN was with Green and Healthy Homes Initiative (GHHI), another organization participating in the CoIIN. GHHI was able to connect MDHHS with Parents for Healthy Homes from the West Michigan Healthy Homes Coalition to increase family engagement on lead poisoning prevention. MDHHS also connected with other states participating in the CoIIN, the Institute for Population Health in Detroit, and MotherToBaby, an organization providing evidence-based information on the safety of medications and other exposures during pregnancy and while breastfeeding. These organizations along with many others had the opportunity to convene and interact in person at a conference hosted by MDHHS and the Institute for Population Health. Each of these new partnerships served as a valuable resource for MDHHS.



Produced Materials & Trainings for Health Care Professionals

With support from these partnerships, MDHHS produced multiple resources and strategies for addressing lead exposure in Michigan, many of which were disseminated to health care providers. MDHHS created an online training module for nurses, social workers, physicians, and pediatricians to increase awareness of lead poisoning. In addition, MDHHS developed a reference sheet for health care providers on guidance for pregnant women and mothers and a risk assessment questionnaire for health care providers to determine relevant risk factors for pregnant women.

Despite the successful partnerships and resources developed through the ColIN, MDHHS experienced several challenges throughout the project. Although its data-driven approach has been effective internally, communicating data-heavy results into messaging the public understands can be challenging. Growth of the lead program over time has led to increased projects and overall workload. MDHHS can utilize its new partnerships to overcome these challenges.

Future Plans: Family & Community Engagement

Moving forward, MDHHS plans to incorporate family and community engagement into the state's strategic plan for lead poisoning prevention. In addition, MDHHS will maintain the partnerships developed through this project and continue to develop new relationships as a collaborative approach to addressing lead poisoning.

Meet the Team from Michigan

The organizations that participated in Michigan's ColIN initiative included the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, Institute for Population Health, Detroit Health Department, and Parents for Healthy Homes.

Learn More

The National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) and other partners are part of the leadership team for the AMCHP MCEH ColIN, which is funded through a three-year grant from the United States Health Resources and Services Administration. By joining the collaborative, NEHA has an important platform to affect policy within the participating states. The objective of the ColIN aligns with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the United States Department of Health and Human Services' broad goal to protect children from the health risks of harmful exposures by developing innovative strategies to reduce and prevent emerging and re-emerging environmental health concerns.

Read more at the following websites:

- neha.org
- mchb.hrsa.gov
- amchp.org
- atsdr.cdc.gov
- www.MCHLeadToolkit.org

