

# Education and Communication Toolkit: Reducing Lead in Drinking Water in Head Start Programs

## A GUIDANCE DOCUMENT FOR HEAD START PROGRAMS

This Toolkit provides resources to assist those assigned with communicating lead in drinking water results to the public including parents and guardians. It includes easy-to-use communication templates, resources, and tips.

Communication should be timely. Communicating test results to the community within 30 days of receipt of results or after remediation is recommended.

### Key Messages

- There is no safe level of lead so reducing all sources is important;
- Head Start programs may have different requirements for testing for lead in drinking water compared to other child care or school facilities. There is no state requirement for other child care facilities to test for lead in drinking water but public schools are required to test. Head Start Programs should test for the presence of lead at all taps used for drinking and cooking to meet federal Head Start program requirements;
- It is important for parents and guardians to know about their Head Start's lead testing results;
- Whenever lead is found in drinking water, steps should be taken to reduce exposure;
- Final decisions on specific interventions to reduce lead exposure in individual facilities are made by Head Start facilities owners/operators based on guidance from MDH, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the federal Office of Head Start; and
- MDH encourages some level of response be taken for any plumbing fixtures identified as producing a detectable level of lead. Best management practices should continue until subsequent testing indicates no lead is present in the water.

### Background and Informational Resources

Background and informational resources specific to the Technical Guidance and Model Plan available to inform a variety of audiences as follows:

- Full Technical Guidance and Model Plan, Head Start Programs should use guidance for schools and child care settings.
  - [Reducing Lead in School Drinking Water \(PDF\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/docs/pbschoolguide.pdf)  
(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/docs/pbschoolguide.pdf>)
- Fact Sheet for Child Care Settings and Head Start Programs
  - [Lead in Drinking Water in Child Care Settings \(PDF\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/docs/contaminants/lead.pdf)  
(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/docs/contaminants/lead.pdf>)

## Communication Tools

The following are resources specific to Head Start Programs using the Technical Guidance and Model Plan prepared to assist you with informing a variety of audiences. When lead results are elevated, communicating test results should occur within 30 days of receipt of results or after remediation steps have been taken.

**INSTRUCTIONS:** The letter templates have been formatted as a fillable form to allow for personalization. They are offered as examples of potential content you may want to consider as you communicate results/inform parents, etc. You can adjust, delete, or copy and paste any text to fit your needs.

- a) Set your cursor in Letterhead/Logo fillable space area and insert your Letterhead/Logo.
  - b) Advance to the next fillable space by pressing the Tab key. Cursor must be in a fillable space to advance to the next fillable space.
  - c) Continue pressing the Tab key to move to the next fillable space. Insert appropriate information.
  - d) Save information for distribution.
- Sample letters to Parents and Staff
    - Sample letter #1 – Longer format; General discussion
    - [Sample letter #1 Longer format \(Word\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/docs/sampleltr1cc.docx)  
<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/docs/sampleltr1cc.docx>
    - Sample letter #2 – Shorter format; Focused on specific result
    - [Sample letter #2 Shorter format \(Word\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/docs/sampleltr2cc.docx)  
<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/docs/sampleltr2cc.docx>
  - Additional Text/Items to consider:
  - Although our facility is taking reasonable steps to reduce lead exposure, there is no safe level of lead. Parents can take further steps at home to reduce exposure. For more information see:
    - [MDH Lead Program \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/lead/\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/lead/)
    - [Lead in Drinking Water](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/contaminants/lead.html)  
<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/contaminants/lead.html>
    - If your facility cannot immediately remedy elevated lead levels, we encourage you to send this notice without delay. In that case, we suggest describing the reason for the delay in implementing a permanent solution and the interim measures you will take to provide safe drinking water until the problem can be addressed.

## Other Ideas to Consider

- Develop contact information list.
  - Develop a contact list of local resources: public health agencies, public water systems, and other available resources.
- Include information about lead testing and communication requirements in a newsletter or parent portal.
- Plan to refer questions about health concerns to health care providers.

## General Resources

The following are general resources you may find helpful (i.e., not specific to new legislation).

- Lead infographic/flyer
  - [Testing for lead in school drinking water \(PDF\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/docs/schoolwater.pdf)  
(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/docs/schoolwater.pdf>)
  - [Types of actions that can be taken when results for lead are elevated \(PDF\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/docs/typeaction.pdf)  
(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/docs/typeaction.pdf>)
- Lead Quick card bookmark and signs
  - [Water: Get the Lead Out \(PDF\)](https://http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/docs/leadbkmrk.pdf)  
(<https://http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/docs/leadbkmrk.pdf>)
  - [Do Not Drink Signs \(PDF\)](https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2021-08/do_not_drink_infographic_508.pdf) ([https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2021-08/do\\_not\\_drink\\_infographic\\_508.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2021-08/do_not_drink_infographic_508.pdf))
- Resources about all sources of lead exposure
  - [MDH Lead Program](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/lead/)  
(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/lead/>)
  - [Lead in Drinking Water](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/contaminants/lead.html)  
(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/contaminants/lead.html>)
- Risk Communication Information
  - [Risk Communication Summary \(PDF\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/docs/riskcomm.pdf)  
(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/docs/riskcomm.pdf>)
  - [Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry](https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/publications_risk_comm.html)  
([https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/publications\\_risk\\_comm.html](https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/publications_risk_comm.html))

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WATER IN HEAD START PROGRAMS

- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Resources (factsheets, templates, webinars)
  - [3Ts for Reducing Lead in Drinking Water: Manual \(https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/3ts-reducing-lead-drinking-water\)](https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/3ts-reducing-lead-drinking-water)

## Contact Information

Minnesota Department of Health  
Environmental Health Division | Drinking Water Protection  
PO Box 64975  
St. Paul, MN  
55164-0975  
651-201-4700

[health.drinkingwater@state.mn.us](mailto:health.drinkingwater@state.mn.us)  
[www.health.state.mn.us](http://www.health.state.mn.us)

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*To obtain this information in a different format, call: 651-201-4700.*