



Panhandle Health District

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Panhandle Health District

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Blood Lead Levels Continue to Decrease in the Silver Valley

KELLOGG, ID – Today, Panhandle Health District (PHD) released the 2015 blood lead survey results. Results show that blood lead levels continue to decrease in the Silver Valley.

PHD's Lead Health Intervention Program (LHIP) screens for lead poisoning in children. Those living in northern Idaho's Silver Valley are vulnerable to lead poisoning, in part due to the presence of heavy metals left over from past mining practices. A cleanup is under way and much progress has been made, but risks still exist in the area.

Screening is offered to children between 6 months through 9 years of age in the Box (Pinehurst, Smeltonville, Kellogg, Wardner, & Elizabeth Park) and 6 months through 6 years of age in the Coeur d'Alene River Basin areas of the Bunker Hill Superfund Site. 100 children in the Box and Basin were voluntarily tested. Of those, 6 children tested above the Center for Disease Control's (CDC) recommended reference value of 5 micrograms per deciliter ($\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$). Children who test over 5 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ are offered free consultations and follow-up testing.

"In 1983, 25% of Silver Valley children had blood lead levels greater than 25 micrograms per deciliter," Andy Helkey, LHIP Manager explained. "Today, blood lead levels above 10 micrograms per deciliter are rare. I attribute the success not only to the cleanup of local yards and public places, but also to parents in our community taking precautions to avoid lead exposure."

Results continue to improve year to year. Panhandle Health District will continue to educate and monitor blood lead levels. According to the CDC, health effects associated with lead are the same whether it enters the body through breathing or swallowing. Lead can affect almost every organ and system in the body, especially the nervous system. No safe level of lead exposure has been identified. Lead is especially dangerous for young children, whose bodies are still developing.