



Tom Barrett
Mayor

Bevan K. Baker, FACHE
Commissioner of Health

Health Department

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NATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH WEEK

City of Milwaukee Health Department partners with UnitedHealthcare to provide free blood lead testing to children

Mayor Tom Barrett, Alderman Willie Wade and Commissioner of Health Bevan K. Baker launched the annual National Public Health Week campaign by unveiling a partnership with UnitedHealthcare to improve childhood lead testing rates.

“Lead poisoning remains a serious public health problem throughout the nation and in Milwaukee,” said Commissioner of Health, Bevan K. Baker. “It is imperative that all Milwaukee children be tested three times before three years of age to allow for early detection and treatment.”

On Monday, the City of Milwaukee Health Department (MHD) and UnitedHealthcare hosted a free blood lead testing day at the Keenan Health Center, located at 3200 N. 36th Street, from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. UnitedHealthcare provided free transportation, a \$10 Walmart gift card to each family, and gift bags filled with healthy snacks for children younger than 30 months of age who received a lead test.

“UnitedHealthcare is pleased to partner with the Milwaukee Health Department to encourage lead testing,” said Dr. Sandra Mahkorn, Chief Medical Officer for UnitedHealthcare/AmeriChoice Wisconsin. “As the largest HMO in the Milwaukee area serving the Medicaid population, making sure that children are tested and treated for lead levels is a high priority for us. High lead levels can diminish a child’s chance for success – and that’s not acceptable.”

Lead is particularly harmful to the developing brain and nervous system of fetuses, newborns and young children. The effects of even low-level lead poisoning include developmental delay, low IQ, hyperactivity, learning disabilities, behavioral problems, impaired hearing, and stunted growth.

The MHD recommends blood lead screening tests for all children three times before the age of three, but only about HALF of the children who should be screened are actually receiving this service. Screening children for lead poisoning serves two important purposes: 1) ensuring children are staying lead-safe, and 2) identifying lead poisoned children for early intervention and treatment.

The City of Milwaukee Health Department operates a Primary Prevention program, which provides money to abate lead-based paint hazards in windows for eligible property owners. If a property is eligible, a property owner may qualify for assistance to make the property lead-safe. An application can be obtained by calling 414-286-5025. The program guidelines and application form are now available online at <http://www.city.milwaukee.gov/router.asp?docid=2828>.

Milwaukee's goal is the eradication of childhood lead poisoning by the year 2010. The MHD has established a model to reduce lead poisoning in children through community and housing-based intervention that has been replicated nationwide. It is estimated that there are approximately 53,000 high risk housing units in the City of Milwaukee. Since May 1997, a total of nearly 13,000 housing units have been made lead-safe through enforcement efforts, innovative partnerships and HUD-funded primary prevention subsidies.

About UnitedHealthcare's Medicaid Health Plan

UnitedHealthcare of Wisconsin, Inc. serves 174,000 BadgerCare Plus and Medicaid SSI beneficiaries in Wisconsin. The health plan is a unit of AmeriChoice, the public sector health care segment of UnitedHealth Group (NYSE: UNH). UnitedHealth Group is a diversified Fortune 50 health and well-being company. AmeriChoice serves 2.3 million beneficiaries of government-sponsored health care programs in 22 states and the District of Columbia. For more information, visit www.americhoice.com.