

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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Janet T. Mills
Governor



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Jeanne M. Lambrew, Ph.D.
Commissioner

March 17, 2022

Senator Ned Claxton, Chair
Representative Michele Meyer, Chair
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: New U.S. CDC Blood Lead Reference Value

Dear Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services:

On October 27, 2021, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) lowered the Blood Lead Reference Value (BLRV) from 5 micrograms of lead per deciliter of blood (ug/dL) to 3.5 ug/dL. Under the Lead Poisoning Control Act (22 MRS § 1330), the Department is required to report to the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services when there is a new BLRV.

The BLRV is based on the 97.5th percentile of the blood lead values among U.S. children ages 1-5 years as assessed through the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES). The BLRV is not a health-based level, nor is it a regulatory standard. The BLRV is based on a population distribution of blood lead levels and is used to identify children with blood lead levels higher than almost all other children. U.S. CDC first adopted the concept of the BLRV in 2012, at which time the level was set at 5 ug/dL. Every four years, U.S. CDC determines whether the value should be updated using the most recent NHANES data. The 2021 update is the first change to the BLRV since 2012.

Under the Lead Poisoning Control Act, the blood lead level used to define lead poisoning is the level at which the Department is mandated to perform environmental lead inspections in children's homes that are multi-family dwellings to identify and remove the sources of their lead exposure. From 2015 to 2019, Maine's statutory definition of lead poisoning was tied directly to the U.S. CDC's BLRV. The 129th Legislature amended the law to set Maine's definition at a confirmed blood lead level of 5 ug/dL or higher and require the Department to report to the Legislature when there is a new BLRV (PL 2019 c 201). Thus, the new BLRV does not impose any requirements on the Department to change the blood lead level at which it provides services. Nonetheless, the Maine CDC is evaluating the updated BLRV and services that we may offer to children with blood lead levels of 3.5 ug/dL to less than 5 ug/dL to both better understand and reduce lead exposure at these lower blood lead levels.

Very truly yours,

DocuSigned by:

Nirav D. Shah

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Nirav D. Shah, M.D., J.D.
Director, Maine CDC