



Enhanced Oversight of Pediatric Lead Testing Requirements

October 6, 2020

In late September, two policies converged to require Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans to enhance their enforcement and oversight of the legal requirement for lead testing of infants with Medi-Cal: [AB 2276](#) and [All Plan Letter 20-016](#).

These actions are in response to a [California State Audit report](#) noting low rates of testing, state-wide, including the counties served by Partnership HealthPlan of California (PHC), in particular in our northeastern counties (Shasta, Siskiyou, Trinity, Lassen and Modoc counties). The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) notes that even [small elevations in blood lead levels are associated with cognitive impairment](#). In addition to the well-known risk from lead-based paint used in older homes, [lead exposure can occur from water pipes, contaminated soil and foreign manufactured candies and pottery](#). The proportion of children who screen positive for elevated lead levels [ranges from 1 to 13% in PHC counties](#).

The major new oversight requirements are:

- If providers elect not to order the screening, they must document in detail, the reason for not conducting the screening. Documentation should include *signature of parent/guardian who refused screening* or the reason signature could not be collected. PHC will be required to audit compliance with this requirement by conducting chart audits.
- Beginning January 1, 2021 PHC must identify, at least quarterly, all members aged 6 months to 6 years, who have no recorded blood lead screening. PHC will reach out to the members directly to recommend lead screening, and to pass this list on to Primary Care Providers (PCPs) who are also expected to reach out to these members to remind them of the need to get tested.

[Federal and State law requires](#) clinicians caring for Medi-Cal patients to conduct blood lead screening on **all** children at age 12 and 24 months of age, and to talk about potential lead exposures at **every** well child visit from 6 months to 6 years of age. Now that enforcement has been enhanced, if your practice has not been ordering routine lead testing, you will want to start planning to change this.

Larger practices should strongly consider building capacity for capillary lead testing in their health centers, to decrease the inconvenience and greater stress of routine venous lead testing.

For more information, please contact your PHC Regional Medical Director.