

ing Exists Only on Paper

es will have both a screening and abatement program.

Last year the city did take an important step toward bolstering the enforcement effort. It began taking cases to Common Pleas instead of Municipal Court to get stiffer penalties and increase chances of compliance. So far, the health department says the new technique is working more effectively.

Under the Model Cities program, the Health Department also would use new \$400 portable analyzers that will make it possible for sanitarians to determine in minutes instead of days whether a house contains dangerous amounts of lead.

The number of cases reported yearly generally has risen, but the increase may reflect more parental awareness of the problem than an actual increase in the number of children poisoned.

Ten years ago, hospitals recognized and treated only the worst victims — children with inflamed brains who of-

ten wound up retarded for life.

Those cases are rarer today, doctors contend. Now the cases getting more attention are children who appear normal, but who really have a dangerous amount of lead in their systems.

Dr. Ted Tapper, a young physician at the Southeast Community Health Center, 900 South st., estimated that a fourth to a third of the children he sees weekly show excess lead.

Many are black, but doctors contend they treat children of all races and ethnic backgrounds who eat paint chips.

"No one knows why the kids eat the paint," Dr. Tapper said. "Some people say it tastes as good as roasted peanuts. I think we could say at least it doesn't taste bad."

The treatment Dr. Tapper administers is a series of shots — six to eight a day — for seven days. Eventually this flushes the lead from a child's system.

Unfortunately, many children may return to the same or a similarly contaminated house only to be poisoned again.

N. Phila. Children To Be Tested for Lead Paint Poison

Some 20,000 North Philadelphia children will be tested for lead poisoning under a \$600,000 lead paint poisoning control program to be started by the City Health Department and the Model Cities Program.

The program also calls for inspections of every dwelling in the Model Cities neighborhood for lead paint hazards, removal of hazardous paint from at least 30 homes from which children have been hospitalized and home visits by community health workers to promote an awareness of the dangers of lead poisoning.

Also, referral of children with dangerous blood lead levels to one of the three Model Cities Family Health Care Programs, moultering of stores that might be selling lead-painted toys, furniture and other articles, and intensive community education, including group discussions and distribution of literature.

Mrs. Gobbie Warren, Model Cities administrator, said thousands of children are suffering from poisoning contracted in homes built before 1950. Lead poisoning can cause irreparable brain damage, she said.

'Controlled' By Tate

"I tol' them there was nothing more that I could do. Tate controls City Council. I told them to go and sit on Tate's doorstep until they get the money for this."

In a 12-3 vote Thursday, Council authorized the transfer of \$1.08 million from the health and welfare departments to other city agencies to meet their payrolls.

In addition to the original \$600,000 Health Department appropriation to fight lead paint poisoning, the Welfare Department would have received \$400,000 to hire additional gang workers.

About 10,000 children may unknowingly be lead poisoning victims, Jonathan Stein, legal counsel for the coalition explained.

Children between the ages of one and six are most often the victims, becoming poisoned when they eat paint that has chipped away from walls and window sills.

Council Majority Leader George X. Schwartz, who argued for passage of the transfer bill, said the city got \$600,000 from the Federal Government for a campaign against lead poisoning in the Model Cities Area, which covers North Philadelphia.

Model Cities includes about half of the recognized "lead belt" from Washington ave. in South Philadelphia to the Kensington section, and between the Delaware River and the Schuylkill.

Area Enlarged

Coalition members say the area has expanded deep into South Philadelphia and across the Schuylkill into West Philadelphia.

Health Department figures indicate one of every three children tested last year in the "lead belt" — about 21,000 — have abnormal levels of lead in their blood.

The coalition, formed last year, is composed of the Welfare Rights Organization, Sierra Club, Black Panther Party, Citywide Tenants Council, Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights, Spring Garden Tenants Association, Kensington Citizens Committee, N.O.R.T.H. Tenant Council, North Philadelphia Tenant Union, Lower Kensington Environmental Center, Northwest Tenant Organization and Fairmount Tenants Council.

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LIMITED WAR

After months of vocal protests and adroit behind-the-scenes lobbying, community groups succeeded in convincing City Council to appropriate the \$600,000.

The money — fraction of the amount the Health Department said was needed to make a dent in the problem —

Continued on Page 7, Col. 1 was to finance a program to test poor children for lead, conduct a house-to-house survey of dwellings and provide a modest amount for removing lead paint from the worst homes.

No sooner was the money authorized than Mayor James H. J. Tate, angry because Council had borrowed the money from the police contingency fund, froze the appropriation and announced it had no intention of spending it.

Instead, the mayor said the city could get the same amount of funds for a lead-poisoning control program through the Model Cities program.

There was an important distinction between the two. The council-appropriated money could have been used citywide while the Model Cities funds, when they finally came through, only could be used in the Model neighborhood, which generally covers North-Central Philadelphia. About half the city's reported cases come from there.

Angry over the veto, community groups marched on City Hall, demanded meetings with the mayor and waged an unsuccessful campaign to get Tate to change his mind. His decision held.

Now, on the eve of another summer of lead-poisoned children, even the Model Cities program isn't off the ground.

MANY PROBLEMS

William Will, deputy Model Cities administrator, said the delay was caused by a "sequence of problems." These included final approval by the Federal government and City Council and a change in civil service regulations so Model Cities residents could be hired for the program, as Federal law requires.

Will maintained these problems now have been solved. He said signing of the \$600,000 contract with the health department was "imminent."

"I don't know where the delay has come," said Jonathan Stein of Community Le-

Combat Lead Poison

obvious the Model Cities bureaucracy did not work on this too hard."

Even when the program gets going, it will be a small drop in a big bucket. The Health Department estimates at least \$3.6 million a year is needed for five years to bring the lead-poisoning problem under control.

BEYOND SLUMS

One reason is because the problem is spreading beyond slum areas. The department figures about 480,000 housing units in Philadelphia were built before 1940 when most manufacturers stopped making lead-based interior paint.

"Out of those, I'd say we've probably removed lead paint from about 200," added Edward Weiner, assistant chief of the accident control unit. "This gives you an idea of the enormity of the problem."

Special legislation was passed by Congress in 1970 to give cities more money for lead-poisoning control. Congress authorized — but did not appropriate — \$10 million for this year.

However, a Congressional source said the administration had "not even made a request for an appropriation" and it was doubtful if anything near the \$10 million will be appropriated this year.

FEW WEAPONS

Meanwhile, this leaves the health department with few weapons to fight the war.

Under a 1966 ordinance, the department has the power to order any landlord or home owner to remove lead paint from a dwelling where it decides that a hazard exists.

But with its limited budget, the department generally inspects only those houses where a child already has been reported poisoned.

"We just don't have the resources to really go out into the community and screen children to find out if thousands are being chronically poisoned," Weiner added.

LACK TREATMENT

Community leaders long have charged that thousands of small children are poisoned every year, often resulting in mental retardation, slowness, but never get treated



MAYOR TATE
... blocking funds?

ment because they are not severe cases.

Unlike New York and Chicago, Philadelphia does not yet have a mass screening program to go into the so-called "lead belt" and take blood samples from children. Neither does it have its own program to remove lead paint from houses when landlords refuse or can't afford to do it.

Now the city contracts with a private firm to remove lead in the worst cases. Model Cities

Funds Idle In War on Lead Poison

\$600,000 'Frozen'

As Paint Falls

Slum Children

By JAMES B. STEELE

Urban Affairs Writer

A year after City Council bowed to community pressure and appropriated \$600,000 for a limited war on childhood lead poisoning, a major battle has been spent.

First vetoed by the mayor and now bogged down in the city's Model Cities program, the money has still not come through to combat "the silent epidemic of the slums," as the disease is called.

Meanwhile, in crowded waiting rooms of inner-city hospitals, where mothers comfort their ailing children and wait for their names to be called, doctors are beginning to see a familiar sign of warm weather.

It comes in the form of children — usually poor children between the ages of one and three — who may look healthy at first glance, but who slowly are being poisoned with lead.

All winter, many have eaten lead-based paint flaking off aging walls and windowsills in slum housing. The lead is deposited in the child's long bones.

SOARS IN SUMMER

Cases are reported year-round, but the number soars in the summer. Warm weather activates the lead, for reasons doctors do not fully understand, and discharges the mineral into a child's bloodstream and tissues.

The result can leave the child listless, nervous, mentally retarded or, in extreme cases, dead. Eighty-nine children have died and thousands have been stricken in Philadelphia alone the last 20 years.

A year ago this month, community groups had hope the city was about to aggressively attack the disease here for the first time.