

MAR 25 1970

City Studies Plan to Cut Lead Paint Poisoning

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Of The Bulletin Staff

A massive program to eliminate lead paint poisoning of Philadelphia children has been proposed to the city Department of Health by a diverse coalition of community groups. The newly-formed Citywide Coalition Against Lead Paint Poisoning includes 11 separate tenants', civic and civil rights groups. Members range from white residents of Kensington to Black Panthers and lawyers in prestigious "establishment" law firms.

They met last Friday in the offices of Community Legal Services, Inc., at 310 S. Juniper st., and endorsed a plan aimed at ending what the groups call a "silent epidemic" of injuries to children who nibble chips of lead-containing paint or plaster in the city's areas of deteriorated housing.

124 Poisoning Cases
There were 124 reported cases of "clinical" lead poisoning in the city in 1969, and one death. "Clinical" cases are those in which noticeable symptoms such as irritability, clumsiness, fatigue, poor eating, vomiting or convulsions occur.

Beyond that, the group estimates that anywhere from 1,200 to 4,100 children aged one to six are carrying excessive levels of lead in their blood — the "silent epidemic" — "leaving in its wake mental retardation, blindness, convulsive disorders, and chronic kidney disease."

To combat the problem, the coalition has proposed: —A paint-sampling program in which rat control workers would be trained to collect paint samples from homes they visit. The city would analyze the samples for lead content.

—A program to remove lead paint from homes where it is found. The coalition has suggested that the city "contract" with rat control workers to carry out this work out to businesses owned and operated by poor people ... located primarily within the target areas.

—A program to collect urine or blood samples in areas of high lead-poisoning risk, to identify children with excessive amounts of lead in their bodies. Clinical cases would be treated in hospitals, others in outpatient clinics.

—Large-scale publicity to educate parents, community and services organizations, school teachers and health workers. The coalition also has proposed that the city establish a Lead Poisoning Control Board, including a majority of members from the community and a minority from city agencies, to insure the program's "continued responsiveness to community needs."

The Welfare Rights Organization, which has adopted the lead paint issue nationally, and some of the other groups in the new coalition, already have met with Dr. Norman R. Ingraham, health commissioner, on the issue. Though Dr. Ingraham has stressed the high cost of a comprehensive control

program, he has directed this department's Accident Control Section to prepare plans to expand the current one. City ordinances prohibit the use of leaded paint indoors, and require landlords to remove such paint (most of it applied more than 30 years ago) where it constitutes a "health hazard" to children.

WRO and others have contended, however, that the city has not provided resources for making the program effective. Besides WRO and the Black Panthers, the groups in the coalition are:

The East of Front Street Tenants Association, the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights, Spring Garden Tenants Associ-

The Evening
PHILADELPHIA
Wednesday
action, the
Committee,
Council
Tenant Un
tion Envi
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and Fairmo