

THE ROLE OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

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If we really wish to prevent lead poisoning we have to recognize it is as a housing problem. It is a complex problem that requires a partnership of effort from all levels of government and a great variety of organizations in the private sector as well. The Federal Government tried to come up with a strategy which at least makes that partnership possible.

The national approach has been one that has maintained that a comprehensive strategy of dealing with lead poisoning is needed, and that is, not only are a lot of partners involved, but screening of children to detect those at risk, bringing those who are exposed to the hazard or have developed symptoms, into treatment, finding the housing units from which they come and taking remedial action in those units, are all part of a strategy. All pieces must be there or the strategy is worthless.

It has been recognized that the Federal Government had better get itself together if it is going to try to cope at all in a helpful way with the problem of lead based paint poisoning. It has been proposed that an interdepartmental committee be formed of several governmental agencies that have an interest in this matter. For example, Housing and Urban Development is critical if the Government is going to have an effective role to play in doing something about housing. The Environmental Protection Administration clearly has a role here, as does HEW, and the Council on Environmental Quality. There may well be others. At the present time, attempts are being made to bring all those departments together in a coordinating committee for the purpose of lead based paint

poisoning control.

Within HEW, such an intradepartmental committee has already been formed. The Food and Drug Administration, the National Institute of Health, the Health Services and Mental Health Administration, of which the Bureau of Community Environmental Management is a part, contribute to this committee. All of those can bring their resources to bear on this problem.

Lastly, a few comments about the money problem. In 1972 HEW was given, after much delay, \$6.5 million for lead-based paint poisoning control. Grants to local communities have been made, and local programs are underway. Because of the enormity of the housing problem, a way to effectively deal with this with limited resources did not seem feasible. A variety of different approaches and control strategies were analyzed and it was decided to focus on case finding in children.