
MEMORANDUM

TO: Superintendents, Principals and Independent School Headmasters
FROM: Daniel M. French, Ed.D., Secretary of Education 
COPY: Mark Levine, M.D., Commissioner of Health
SUBJECT: Vermont's Statewide Lead in School Drinking Water Testing Program and
School Tap Survey
DATE: June 3, 2019

You are receiving this memo because your school district, supervisory union or independent school is required to test for and remediate lead in drinking water under a law recently passed by the Vermont General Assembly. The intent of this law is to provide a safe and healthy environment for the children and staff in our schools by ensuring access to safe drinking water.

The legislature has established an ambitious timeline for completing this testing, requiring all schools and licensed childcare facilities in Vermont to complete initial testing by December of 2020. Testing will be conducted by region according to a schedule developed by the Vermont Department of Health. You are receiving this communication now because you must complete a tap inventory and survey by **Friday, June 28, 2019 at 4 p.m.**

Background

Many Vermont schools are in older buildings, which means they are more likely to have lead in their plumbing. While a major source of lead poisoning in Vermont children is paint, lead in older plumbing and fixtures can add to a child's overall lead exposure. Lead exposure poses a special risk to children because they absorb lead into their systems more easily than adults do. Lead can slow down growth, impair development and learning, and cause behavior problems.

To address these risks, the General Assembly recently passed legislation that requires all schools and licensed or registered child care providers to test their drinking water for lead and remediate when results are found to be at or above the action level of 4 parts per billion (ppb). This law builds on the 2017 water testing pilot project in which several Supervisory Unions and Districts participated.

The project is being conducted by the Vermont Department of Health in collaboration with the Agencies of Education and Natural Resources. The State of Vermont will cover all testing costs. The State will also reimburse for the actual costs to replace fixtures up to a certain amount. The Health Department will provide guidance and assistance to schools as they work through the process of testing, community notification and remediation.

Program Details

Beginning in SY 2019-2020, the Health Department will manage a testing program for all schools and childcare centers in Vermont. The first step is to complete a tap inventory and online survey now, in order to give the Health Department lab the information it needs to begin the testing program in the fall.

The list below outlines what your SD/SU or independent school must do to comply with the requirements of the program:

- **Tap Inventory** – A SD/SU first step will be to complete an inventory of all the taps for every school in the district. **The tap inventory will take the most time**, so you should plan to start it as soon as practicable. SD/SUs and independent schools will use the tap inventory to complete the online survey described below.
- The Health Department has created a tap inventory template, and a video that will walk you through the process for filling it out. Both can be found at healthvermont.gov/leadtest-schools.
- **Online Survey** – The survey is essentially an online order form to tell the Health Department Laboratory how many water test kits each school will need. This information will come from the completed tap inventory.
 - Please **complete and submit the survey by Friday, June 28 at 4 p.m.**
 - The survey will also ask SD/SUs and independent schools:
 - for contact information for the school and SD/SU, including where to ship sample bottles and results.
 - whether a licensed child care program operates out of the school (including preschool and after school programs).
 - for information about the school building, including if it was built before 1986 and if the plumbing has been updated before 1986.
- **Collecting Water Samples** – Schools will collect samples during the 2019-2020 school year. A schedule will be posted at healthvermont.gov/leadtest-schools.
 - Sample bottles will be mailed to the contact listed in the online survey before each school is scheduled to collect samples. They will also receive more information about when to collect the samples and how to return them to the lab for testing.
 - The Health Department has produced videos about how to collect samples and return them to the lab as well as other guidance to help you with this process. They can be found at healthvermont.gov/leadtest-schools.
- **Community Notification** – Each school will need to notify their school community about testing at least 5 days before collecting water samples.
 - The notice should be accompanied by an informational sheet about the health effects of lead and other sources of lead. A letter template and the informational sheet can be found at healthvermont.gov/leadtest-schools. The materials are also available in nine other languages.
- **Child Care Programs** – If there is a licensed child care program that operates at a school, including preschool and afterschool programs, the school is responsible for testing all taps used by the program. Child care programs have been instructed to contact their school's administrator if they need more information.

If you have questions or need more information, please dial 2-1-1. All timeline information and resources are available at healthvermont.gov/leadtest-schools. This webpage will be updated as information becomes available.

We will send additional updates with more information and resources as the program continues.

Thank you for your participation in helping to protect the health of our school community.