

Protecting Our Children

Children Encounter Pests, Mold And Lead At Home

(NAPSA)—A group of concerned people are working on ways to protect children from dangers that lurk in their own homes.

Low-income and minority children in particular are disproportionately exposed to the devastating health effects of pests, mold and lead, according to a report by the non-profit organization National Organization of African Americans in Housing (NOAAH).

The report cites a lack of knowledge about the threats that pests, mold and lead pose; the physical neglect of predominantly low-income areas; and residents' limited resources to solve the problems as the reasons poor children suffer more than others.

"Too many of our children are put at risk every day in their own homes," said NOAAH Executive Director Kevin Marchman. "It's time we all took steps now to make our children safe."

Low-income housing attracts more than its fair share of pests, because the housing tends to be old and in need of repair. Because minorities are disproportionately concentrated in this type of housing, they suffer the most from health problems that are caused by pests.

The report recommends property management and housing occupants be educated on the negative health effects associated with pests.

According to the report, mold is also a growing problem and a known trigger of asthma, especially in young children.

The report says housing owners need mandatory operation and maintenance plans for handling water issues, and that buildings



Children need to be protected from pests, mold and lead found in low-income housing.

should be evacuated when widespread fungal contamination is linked to illness.

Finally, the report found that lead-based paint (LBP) hazards still pose a very real health concern for millions of young children every day. "High lead-levels in humans have been shown to cause lower IQ, reduced attention span and learning disabilities," Marchman said. "Severe poisoning can cause mental retardation, coma, convulsions and even death."

The report recommends improved blood-lead screening and a database to track places where children have been poisoned.

"If we work to put the necessary guidelines in place for government officials and property owners and managers, we can start to reverse this devastating trend," Marchman said.