

Protecting Children's Health

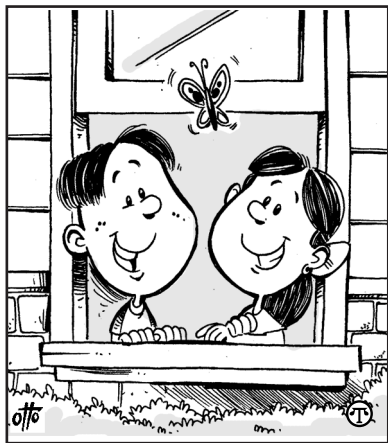
Getting The Lead Out

(NAPSA)—Federal and state officials are telling landlords to make their properties safe from lead paint hazards or face the consequences. Over the past decade, federal officials have forced landlords to clean up deteriorating lead-based paint in nearly 160,000 apartments in 13 cities and have collected almost \$1 million in fines and contributions to community health projects.

"This settlement places sellers and landlords on notice that the federal government will vigorously enforce the law and hold them accountable if they place children and families at risk," Environmental Protection Agency spokesman John Peter Suarez said of a recent settlement requiring lead clean up in 3,000 Los Angeles, California apartments.

The latest data from the Centers for Disease Control shows the efforts are bearing fruit. CDC says the number of children with worrisome amounts of lead in their blood has fallen dramatically from 88 percent in the late 1970s to 2.2 percent today.

Individual states with vigorous enforcement programs also report sharp declines in the number of children with higher blood lead levels. For example, Massachusetts reported a 72 percent drop in elevated blood lead levels between



1995 and 2002, and Vermont reported a decline of 59 percent.

Although there is still more to be done, CDC's Richard Jackson calls the decline in blood lead levels "a public health success story."

A current threat to children comes from poorly maintained lead-based paint in American homes, mostly those built before 1940. Government agencies and public health groups agree that well-maintained paint is not a problem. The best solution is maintaining the paint, and governments at all levels are cracking down on property owners who allow paint to deteriorate.

As Housing and Urban Development Department official David Jacobs explained: "Every child deserves a healthy home."