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Dear Editor:

Even low levels of lead exposure can cause learning disabilities, intellectual impairment, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and behavior problems. A learning disability is a neurological condition that interferes with an individual's ability to store, process, or produce information. Learning disabilities can affect one's ability to read, write, speak, spell, compute math, reason and also attention, memory, coordination, social skills and emotional maturity.

Testing for lead poisoning and, if needed, removal of lead from children's bodies is only the first step. Any plan for dealing with this health crisis should contain the following:

1. All two to five-year-old children testing positive for lead poisoning be periodically assessed for early warning signs of a learning disability/neurological impairment (LD/NI) and, if warranted, receive early intervention services at school and home. Early intervention can significantly reduce the long term impact of a LD/NI.
2. All seven-year-old children testing positive for lead poisoning be given a comprehensive evaluation, including a cognitive assessment to identify specific problem areas.
3. All children testing positive for lead poisoning be assigned a special education advocate/ parent trainer to help secure the right services at the right time.
 - Schools tend to provide the least amount of services needed and eventually increase services if needed.
 - Schools should provide the appropriate amount of services from the beginning.
 - The role of the special education advocate is to represent the best interests of the child.
 - Parent trainers work with families to help reduce disruptions at home.
4. Recognition by the State of Michigan that many children identified with LD/NI will need an on-going system of supports as adults.

LDA offers information about types of learning disabilities and early signs, assessment, evaluation, special education services, legislation, advocacy, and issues faced by adults. For more information, visit our website at LDAAmerica.org.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary-Clare Reynolds".

Mary-Clare Reynolds
Executive Director
Learning Disabilities Association of America