



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

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**STATE LAUNCHES PROGRAM TO TEST FOR LEAD IN TAP WATER
AT CHILD CARE FACILITIES**

HONOLULU – The Hawai'i State Department of Health (DOH) and the Department of Human Services (DHS) are launching a program this week to test the tap water at all licensed child care and preschool facilities in Hawai'i, including those located at private residences. If tap water is found to have an unsafe level of lead, the facility's owner will be required to take immediate corrective action – such as installing a filter system, replacing plumbing fixtures or switching to bottled water.

“This new program by the state supplements testing procedures already required by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency,” Health Director Chiyome Fukino, M.D. said. “Even though water delivered from the public water systems meets federal and state standards, there is a risk of lead leaching into tap water when pipes are joined by lead solder in older buildings, or from the water fixtures in use. “

“It's important to minimize exposure to lead, especially among children. Adverse health effects associated with lead ingestion can include learning disabilities, reduced attention spans, hyperactivity, impaired growth and behavioral issues,” Fukino said.

“Our goal is to ensure that all child care facilities provide healthy environments for Hawai'i's keiki,” said Human Services Director Lillian Koller. “We believe the majority of child care facilities do have safe tap water. These tests will determine if individual facilities need to take corrective action to ensure their water supply is safe.”

(more)

The statewide testing program is expected to span over two years at an estimated cost of \$569,000. The program is federally funded through the EPA Drinking Water State Revolving Fund administered by the DOH. The DOH has contracted with Honolulu-based AMEC Earth & Environmental, Inc. to conduct the testing. Child care facilities will not be charged for the water analysis. However, they will be required to take responsibility for any remedial actions if problems are found.

The testing will be conducted in phases covering selected areas. Parents of children in licensed child care facilities will be notified prior to the testing and provided additional information and test results. There are approximately 1,200 licensed daycare facilities in Hawai'i, including roughly 550 which operate in private homes.

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