

Boy tests positive for high lead levels during screening

By [Paul Sisson \(/staff/paul-sisson/\)](/staff/paul-sisson/) 5:35 p.m. Feb. 26, 2013

A 9-year-old boy tested positive for high lead levels in his blood during a screening event held in Logan Heights Tuesday.

The boy was one of 79 children tested at King-Chavez Primary Academy as part of the “Home Safe Home” program, a joint effort of the San Diego Housing Commission, the Environmental Health Coalition and La Maestra Health Center, to detect and prevent lead poisoning in local neighborhoods. Testing is made possible by a \$2.48 million grant awarded last year by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

To date, the program has tested 542 children at seven events since 2010, detecting elevated lead levels in 10 children using a quick blood test that requires a quick prick on each child’s finger. Health officials use portable blood analyzers to quickly determine, within just a few minutes, whether elevated lead levels are present.

Maria Velasquez, the housing commission’s vice president of community relations, said that the program focuses on neighborhoods in the city with a high concentration of housing stock built before 1978.

That’s the year the federal government banned lead-based paint which is the primary source of lead exposure for young children.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 4 million households nationwide have high lead levels, putting children at increased risk of learning disabilities and behavior problems.

Lead poisoning, the CDC notes, often occurs with no warning symptoms, which makes a blood test the best way for parents to make sure their children are not affected.

For homes where lead paint is discovered, county housing officials also have access to grant funding to remove the hazard.

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