Lead in Water Testing: Lessons Learned from the Illinois Experience
About Elevate Energy

The new clean energy economy is an opportunity to make life better for everyone. We’re sharing new ways of thinking about energy to help families like the Ortegas move toward greater energy security.

At Elevate Energy, solving big problems is in our DNA. We transform the energy system to be cleaner and more inclusive. We deliver and we will build jobs to bring more people into the clean energy circle. Transform, deliver, build. Now that’s smarter energy use for all.

Equity and excellence are at the core of our commitment to families, communities, and organizations. This means that people are saving money on bills, training for new jobs in the solar industry, and living in healthier, more efficient homes.
Lead in Water Pilot Project

Elevate Energy and EDF tested the drinking water from 146 different fixtures.

At 4 different child care buildings

Serving nearly 600 children in Chicago

2 child care facilities required lead in water remediation

We replaced 1 lead service line at a childcare facility

We replaced 13 faucets with new NSF-61 certified faucets

And installed 1 undersink filter that is NSF-53 certified for lead removal

The pilot’s remediation efforts reduced all lead levels at drinking water outlets to 2 ppb or below

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States with lead in water testing requirements for child care facilities

- California
- Oregon
- Illinois
- Washington
- New Hampshire
- Vermont
- New Jersey
- Rhode Island
- Connecticut
- Maine
Why are these new requirements important?

- Lead is a toxic metal
- There is no safe level of exposure to lead in children
- Fetuses, infants, and young children are most vulnerable because of their:
  - Developing brains and nervous systems
  - Blood brain barrier lets lead through
  - Increased exposure from behaviors like crawling and putting objects the mouth
- Impact of lead can cause learning and behavioral problems and lower IQs.
Why are these new requirements important?
IL lead in water testing requirements for child care facilities

- Test all drinking and cooking water sources
- Post results and share with DCFS
- Implement immediate actions if results $\geq 2.01$ ppb
- Develop a mitigation plan and share with DCFS and parents
- Retest until lead levels below 2.01 ppb
IL lead in water testing requirements for child care facilities

Provider responsibilities:

- Select a lab
- Sample water sources
- Pay for testing costs
- Interpret lab results
- Post test results for parents
- Develop a mitigation plan (if needed)
- Pay for mitigation
- Retest

Little to no funding or technical support
Early efforts to help child care providers

Part I: Lead in Water Overview

Guidance for Illinois child care facilities to comply with new Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) requirements and reduce lead in water

October 9, 2018
Questions from providers:

- How do I understand the new rules?
- Who can I contact with questions?
- What happens if I miss the deadline?
- How do I know if I’m sampling properly?
- Do I need to sample X location?
- What lab should I use? Can I test myself?
- How do I read my lab results?
- I have lead in my drinking water... what do I do next?
- How do I tell parents about what is going on?
- Do you have this information in Spanish?
- How do I pay for all of this?
Resources Developed to Support Child Care Providers
Lead in Water

Illinois passed legislation that requires certain licensed child care centers and homes to test drinking water for lead and mitigate when necessary. Illinois Action for Children and our partners at the Environmental Defense Fund and Elevate Energy hosted a four-part webinar series addressing lead in water overview, testing for lead in water, and mitigation strategies.

These letter templates will help you communicate with parents, staff, and DCFS about your lead in water test results and follow up actions.

1. Template Letter Notifying Parents that Your Facility will Test its Drinking Water for Lead  |  En Español
   This is a template to help you write a letter that informs parents and guardians that you will be testing the drinking water at your facility for lead. This is the first letter you will send.

2. Template Letter for Communicating your Test Results if-Below-2.01  |  En Español
   This is a template to help you write a letter that informs parents and guardians of the results of your lead in water test. Use this version if all your test results were BELOW 2.01 ppb.
Lead in Water Resource Program for home providers:
- Testing stipend
- NSF-53 water pitcher and replacement filters
- NSF-53 faucet mount filter and replacement filters
Lead in water workshops:
- Covers new testing requirements
- Lessons on how to test for lead and mitigate
- Bilingual; certified lead safety training

Resources to address lead in water:
- Bilingual call center to field questions
- Online resource center
- Videos
- Communication templates
For me and my colleagues, the Elevate water workshops have been very important, eye opening. The ability to present the workshops in Spanish has been tremendous. We even suggest to start something in our own facilities with the families we serve. Our parents need to be educated about the consequences of lead in water.

- MariCarmen Macias, Home-based Childcare Provider

**Lead in water workshops:**
- Covers new testing requirements
- Lessons on how to test for lead and mitigate
- Hosted in English or Spanish
- Certified lead safety training
Train the Trainer:
-Day-long workshop to childcare trainers
-Enables expanded education throughout the state
The Impact

- 24 workshops → 900 providers → serving 5,000 children
- Reimbursements & mitigation tools to 300 providers → serving 3,022 children
- 2,400+ providers have participated in online webinars
- 41 childcare trainers educated

Elevate expects these numbers to grow throughout 2019 as many providers still need to test their drinking water for lead.
10 Tips from the Illinois experience
Suggestion #1

Learn from other states and voluntary programs

• Learn from past challenges and successes.
• Don’t reinvent the wheel.
• The Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) has a helpful state tracker: https://www.edf.org/health/child-care-lead-water-requirements
Suggestion #2

Include child care providers and advocacy groups in early discussions

- Talk with childcare providers (both home and center based) before any requirements or instructions go live.
- Providers will have valuable input on where the requirements may be confusing or hard to implement.
Carefully think through your action level and testing protocol

- Be prepared to explain the importance of the action level and testing protocol you select.
  - EDF’s Putting children first: Tackling lead in water at child care facilities has discussion on action levels: [https://www.edf.org/health/tackling-lead-water-child-care-facilities](https://www.edf.org/health/tackling-lead-water-child-care-facilities)
  - The EPA’s 3Ts Guidance has helpful instructions on a 2-step sampling procedure: [https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/3ts-reducing-lead-drinking-water-toolkit](https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/3ts-reducing-lead-drinking-water-toolkit)
Suggestion #4

Consider who will be responsible for lead in water sampling

• Will a state department, water utility, child care provider, or third party contractor conduct lead in water sampling?

• What are the pros and cons of each approach?
Encourage streamlined communications from those interacting with providers about testing requirements

- Provide robust training on the new rules to any labs and/or child care licensing agents.
- These representatives will be asked many questions from providers and it’s important to have consistent messaging and instructions.

Tip: Ensure child care providers know who they can contact with questions and concerns.
Partner with child care groups and leaders to get the word out

- Identify leading child care advocacy groups in your state. Can they help spread the word about testing requirements?
- Local provider groups are also a powerful tool for getting the word out.
Create materials in multiple languages

- Translate the rules and supporting materials into multiple languages for childcare providers.
- This will help ensure a more equitable rollout of your lead in water testing requirements or programs.
Suggestion #8

Provide financial support for testing and mitigation

• If child care providers are being asked to conduct lead in water sampling and mitigation efforts on their own, it is critical to provide technical and financial support.

• Explore federal, state, and foundation funding opportunities.

• Beware of labs that may overcharge for testing costs.
Suggestion #9

Offer robust training on the new requirements for providers

- Trainings could include instruction on sampling, reading results, mitigation, and communication with parents.
- Specify practical and effective mitigation options; establish criteria for a mitigation plan.
- Host online and in person workshops where providers can ask questions.
- Develop resources providers can access online when undergoing testing and mitigation (videos, factsheets).

See sample resources for providers: actforchildren.org/lead-water
Suggestion #10

Allow ample time for providers to sample, but also establish deadlines

- Facilities will need time to understand how testing works, prepare communications for parents, and prepare their facility for testing. Take these factors into consideration when establishing deadlines.
Lead in Water Resources

- EPA’s 3Ts guidance on lead in water testing in child care facilities:
  epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/3ts-reducing-lead-drinking-water-toolkit

- Environmental Defense Fund’s Lead Webpage:
  edf.org/health/lead-toxic-legacy

- Elevate Energy’s Lead in Water Resource Program:
  https://www.elevateenergy.org/leadtesting/

- Lead in Water Resource Center:
  actforchildren.org/lead-water/
Questions?

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