



For immediate release:
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New Initiative to Determine Lead Levels in Drinking Water at Child Care and Pre-K Facilities

Montgomery - In an effort to promote public confidence and to help child care and pre-K facilities minimize child exposure to lead in drinking water, the Alabama Department of Human Resources (DHR), Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education (ADECE), and Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) will assist child care facilities, Alabama First Class Pre-K, and Head Start programs with voluntary testing for lead in drinking water in 2020. The program is funded by a grant from the US Environmental Protection Agency.

Childhood exposure to lead has long been a concern of researchers and medical professionals. While public water systems are required to conduct rigorous testing to ensure the water they produce meets all health-based standards and is non-corrosive, there are no state or federal requirements for child care centers or schools to test for lead in drinking water.

ADEM Director Lance R. LeFleur said, “This project will provide parents and staff with information needed to make informed decisions to minimize potential exposure to lead. We look forward to working with DHR and ADECE on protecting our most vulnerable population - children under six years of age - from health concerns of lead in drinking water.”

During 2020, as DHR and ADECE personnel visit with staff from these facilities, they will be provided instructions and sampling kits. Once facility staff collect the samples, they will be transmitted to the state drinking water laboratory for analysis. The results will be provided to facility staff to be shared with parents and will be posted on the ADEM website. Should there be any results higher than the Action Level of 20 parts per billion, additional information on follow-up steps will be provided to the affected facility. DHR Commissioner Nancy Buckner said “DHR’s primary mission is to protect children.”

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This program will help caregivers of children make informed decisions concerning the safety of the drinking water at the facilities where they place their children. Secretary of Early Childhood Education Jeana Ross says, “Parents of young children have many worries - exposure to lead shouldn’t be one of them. This will be a great opportunity to alleviate that concern in a very open, transparent manner.”

This effort follows the success of the partnership between the Alabama State Department of Education and ADEM to test the drinking water of public schools. The program has resulted in nearly 5,000 samples of drinking water analyzed at more than 1,000 public schools.

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