



## *Media Advisory*

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### **NAACP/IU Forum to Address Risks of Lead Poisoning in Young Children**

**INDIANAPOLIS, January 15, 2020** — The Greater Indianapolis NAACP Branch #3053 — in partnership with the IU McKinney School of Law, the IU Office of Community Engagement, and the IU Bicentennial — will hold a public forum about children’s exposure to lead and how Indiana could reduce childhood lead poisoning. This panel discussion will explore the dangers posed to children by lead in water, soil and homes in Indiana and the effects of those dangers. Emphasis will be placed on strategies for remediating the problem and barriers to those strategies.

**When:** Wednesday, January 29, 2020, 6:00 - 8:30 pm

**Where:** IU McKinney School of Law, 530 West New York Street, Indianapolis

**Who:** Panelists at this forum will include:

**DR. VIRGINIA CAINE, M.D., Director of the Marion County Public Health Department.** Dr. Caine is also a Bicentennial Professor and Associate Professor of Medicine with the Infectious Diseases Division at the Indiana University School of Medicine. She served as the President for the American Public Health Association, the nation’s oldest and largest public health organization. She also received the 2010 National Medical Association’s Physician of the Year Award.

**DR. MONA HANNA-ATTISHA, M.D., MPH, FAAP — Founder and director of the Michigan State University and Hurley Children’s Hospital Pediatric Public Health Initiative,** an innovative and model public health program in Flint, Michigan. A pediatrician, scientist, activist and author, Dr. Hanna-Attisha was named one of Time magazine’s 100 Most Influential People in the World for her role in uncovering the Flint Water Crisis and leading recovery Efforts.

**ANNA AIZER, Ph.D., Professor and Chair of Economics, Brown University** — A labor and health economist with interests in the area of child health and well-being. Aizer has examined the impact of public programs on child health and well-being, including the impacts of Rhode Island’s successful legislation to reduce children’s exposure to lead.

**DR. JANET PHOENIX, MD, MPH Research Professor, George Washington University Milken Institute School of Public Health.** Dr. Phoenix managed the National Lead Information Center, a clearinghouse and training center jointly supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Department

of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). She served on the CDC Lead Poisoning Advisory Committee.

**VICKI SUDHALTER, Ph.D, Neuropsychologist Staten Island, NY** — Specialist in performing neuropsychological exams on young children with elevated levels of lead in Flint, Michigan, Washington, DC, and New York.

**KARLA JOHNSON, MPH, Administrator of Healthy Homes and Senior Care Management at the Marion County Public Health Department.**

**Why:**

This forum will discuss efforts in Flint, Michigan; Rhode Island; New York; Indiana and other communities to reduce children's exposure to lead and improve childhood screening and treatment for lead poisoning. Three bills are pending in the Indiana General Assembly to reduce children's lead exposures, but they have not yet received a hearing. The deadline for bills to be heard in committee is January 30.

Pending legislation sponsored by Sen. Jean Breaux includes [Senate Bill 286](#), which would set a more protective definition of lead poisoning in state law and require that schools ensure that children are tested for elevated lead levels; and [SB 285](#), which would require the State Department of Health to take all necessary steps to increase the number of Medicaid-covered children who are screened for lead poisoning.

Sen. Lonnie Randolph and Sen. Rick Niemeyer have sponsored [SB 214](#), which would require testing of the drinking water in every school building in Lake County at least once in each period of two calendar years to determine whether the drinking water exceeds the lead action level for drinking water established by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Indiana has a poor record of conducting lead screenings during doctor visits, which is the best way to identify children with lead poisoning. Federal law requires all children eligible for Medicaid to be screened for lead poisoning at 12 and 24 months. According to the state's [2017 Childhood Lead Surveillance Report](#), while 94% of all Medicaid-eligible children received the measles-mumps-rubella vaccine, only 11% of those children were given the required blood lead test.

According to the CDC, "Lead exposure can affect nearly every system in the body and is associated with numerous behavioral and learning problems (e.g. reduced IQ, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, juvenile delinquency, and criminal behavior). Research indicates that even low levels of lead in a child's blood can affect IQ, the ability to pay attention, and academic achievement."

The Greater Indianapolis NAACP earlier this year pushed to create a Lead Testing Initiative to offer free testing to students in kindergarten and first grade at the Mayor's Charter Schools, Indianapolis Public Schools and the Metropolitan School District of Pike Township. According to the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), there is no known safe level of lead in young children, and millions of children are still exposed to lead in their homes.

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