



## *Lead-free Learning Initiative*

Utah's Lead-free Learning Initiative is a voluntary program that helps schools and childcare programs test for lead in their drinking water. Participating schools and childcare facilities will be awarded grant funding to cover the costs of testing for lead in the drinking water in their buildings.

### **Why is it important to test school drinking water for lead?**

Young children and infants exposed to lead are at risk for delays in their physical and mental development, lower IQ levels, and brain



damage. Because children spend a significant amount of their time at school, it is critical that these facilities — particularly those serving children ages six and under — know if their drinking water contains lead. The Utah Department of Environmental Quality's (DEQ's) Division of Drinking Water (DDW) is committed to addressing lead in drinking water in schools and childcare facilities and reducing childhood lead exposure across the state.

### **Don't schools and childcare facilities already test for lead?**

Under state rules, schools and childcare facilities are only required to test for lead if they themselves serve as a public water system, and most schools and childcare facilities in Utah are NOT public water systems. Some schools and child care facilities have elected to do testing on their own, and a number of schools conducted sampling through the DEQ and Utah Department of Health (DOH) [voluntary sampling program in 2017](#).

### **What is the source of funding?**

DDW will use money awarded to states by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under the [Lead Testing in School and Child Care Program Drinking Water Grant](#) program. Authorized under the [Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation \(WIIN\) Act](#), the grant creates a voluntary program to assist schools and childcare facilities that wish to test for lead in

their drinking water. Utah was awarded a \$434,000 grant that will be administered by DDW. The funding will be used to test as many childcare facilities and schools as possible for lead in their drinking water. DDW will reach out to schools that didn't take part in the 2017 pilot study, encourage their participation, and offer technical assistance. If the total amount requested exceeds the funds available, DDW will prioritize applications based on the community's financial need and the number of children under six served by the building.

### **How long will the project take?**

This project will take place over approximately two years and end on September 30, 2021.

### **What can schools do if discover they have lead levels in their drinking water above the action level?**

Schools with lead levels above the action level can use a [variety of methods](#) to reduce lead levels and remediate the problem.

- Implement a [flushing program](#) and water usage plan to safeguard against lead exposure. This program may include flushing faucets at sinks and/or water fountains and limiting water consumption for food and beverage preparation to cold-water faucets.
- Replace faucets or other drinking water outlets found to be above the action level for lead. Ensure the use of "lead-free" materials, including lead-free solders.
- Physically disconnect faucets or plumbing with high levels of lead.
- Replace lead pipes on school or childcare property.
- Reconfigure plumbing to bypass sources of lead contamination.
- Install a water-treatment system.
- Provide bottled water.

#### ***Action Level for Lead***

EPA is required by law to determine the level of contaminants in drinking water at which no adverse health effects are likely to occur. These health-based levels are called maximum contaminant level goals (MCLGs). EPA set the MCLG for lead in drinking water at zero because the best available science has not been able to determine a safe level for lead in drinking water. However, the agency did set an action level of 15 micrograms per liter ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{L}$ ) that triggers additional actions by public water systems if over 10 percent of the faucets sampled exceed this level. Since the 15  $\mu\text{g}/\text{L}$  action level is the only standard available under current law, states sampling for lead in their schools measure their test results against this standard.

*Remediation and replacement activities are NOT covered under the grant funding.*