

## #2 Home Inspection / Interview

When a case of lead poisoning is identified, an investigator from the county health department is sent to the child's home to help identify the source of the problem.

- 1) Read the investigator's notes about their visit to your sibling's home and underline things that you have discovered can be risk factors for lead poisoning. Circle things that might protect against lead exposure.
- 2) After reading the notes, list below some questions you would like to ask in a follow-up interview.

### The Peterson Family

The Peterson's' home is in a middle income area immediately adjacent to I-95. There is no current industry in the area, although in the past the neighbors say an empty lot down the street was used as a recycling center about five years ago.

Tests showed the family's eighteen-month old-daughter has a blood lead level of 16 µg/dl(micrograms per deciliter). Their little girl shows no symptoms of lead poisoning, according to her mother and the caregiver at the nearby daycare center who cares for her three days a week.

The family is white/Caucasian and has several children, ages 6, 5 and 1 years though only the youngest tested positive for lead poisoning. The family home is an old house built in 1926. The family is in the process of restoring the house. The father says that the house needed much more work than they originally thought and now they are living in the house while they are finishing the construction. As part of the renovation all the old plumbing was removed and replaced. The back yard has a very old swing set that has some rust and flaking paint. There is also a grassy play area and a small vegetable garden. The family has one pet, a German Shepherd dog that sleeps under the porch at night. The child's father is a policeman with the local police department and the child's mother is an artist. The mother creates artwork using stained glass and also does some pottery as a hobby. The family rarely eats home-cooked meals together (often relying on fast food) but when they do they maintain a vegetarian diet. The family gets regular medical care and has basic health insurance. The family originally moved to Miami from Cleveland, Ohio five years ago and hasn't traveled outside the U.S. in the past year.

### The Hernandez Family

The Hernandez' home is located on a lovely, quiet street with large Mediterranean-style houses. The family is Hispanic and moved to Miami from Argentina one year ago right before their second son was born. The family includes the grandmother who cares for the little boy when the parents are working or traveling. The mother is an art dealer and the father works for a bank. The little boy was screened for

lead exposure by his pediatrician, who discovered his high blood lead level of 24.5  $\mu\text{g}/\text{dl}$ . The little boy, now two, has been seen putting dirt or sticks in his mouth. He is a very "rough and tumble" little child and "is always getting into things" says his mother. His grandmother has given him some medicine that she brought with her from Argentina to help with his stomachaches.

The house is generally in good repair with old Cuban tile floors in the main room. The father notes that the tiles need to be resealed but that he hasn't had time to hire someone yet. The family brought all their furniture with them from South America including the child's painted bed and wardrobe. The family also brought their entire set of glazed ceramic cookware which they use daily. Before he became sick, the little boy ate well, enjoying yogurt and other snacks during the day and usually a meat dish in the evening. The house has a small yard that is heavily landscaped with tropical plants. The home is air-conditioned and windows are rarely left open. The home has old metal blinds in some areas that appear to be deteriorating from age. The family has no pets.

## The Pierre Family

The Pierre's home is located in a section of Miami known as Little Haiti, and the family is of Haitian origin. Members of the family frequently return to Haiti on short trips. The family came to Miami five years ago and initially lived with relatives but now lives in part of a rented house. The house is old and the owner almost never makes repairs or does needed maintenance. When work is done on the property, the family notes, the person who does it seems unknowledgeable and rarely finishes or cleans up. There are visible patches of peeling paint on both the exterior and the interior of the home. One of the other tenants in the house sometimes repairs batteries in the back yard for resale at a local garage. The Pierre's part of the house is kept very neat by the mother who is often at home with the family's three children. She shows how she sweeps and wet mops the house everyday to help control the dust from outside. The back yard is quite dusty and the mother prefers that the children do not play there.

The father has a steady job painting cars in a body shop. Neither parent has a formal education and the mother in particular speaks little English. Because of this, they don't have medical insurance, have never applied for Medicaid and take the children to the emergency room only when they seem really sick. The little girl whose blood has high lead (19  $\mu\text{g}/\text{dl}$ ) only seemed a little listless and was having trouble sleeping. To remedy this, the mother had consulted the local Botanika and had purchased some herbs for making tea, which the child was encouraged to drink every night. The family's diet includes many fruits, vegetables, legumes and rice but sometimes they save money by eating few meat or dairy products. Sometimes to add to the family's income, an uncle who lives with them works on a farm in South Miami applying fertilizer and harvesting produce. This uncle also occasionally does woodcarving and paints his carvings in the backyard. Among his carvings are toys he has made for his niece and two nephews.

## Answers (See the Key to Risk and Protective Factors that Follows)

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