

IDPH News Release

Contact: Polly Carver-Kimm (515) 281-6693 or pcarver@idph.state.ia.us

New Child Health Screenings Take Effect This School Year

Dental and lead screenings required

As Iowa children enjoy their last few weeks of summer ‘freedom,’ parents are reminded back-to-school preparations for the 2008/2009 school year include two new health screenings required by law. Beginning this year, Iowa law requires that newly enrolled children have received a blood lead test and a screening for dental disease.

“Our department will work closely with Iowa schools to ensure that parents are aware of any potential risk posed to their children by lead poisoning or dental disease,” said Iowa Department of Public Health Director Tom Newton. “This is a clear example of what can be achieved when legislators, schools and public health share a common interest—the health of our youngest Iowans.”

The law strengthens prior legislation in regards to compliance with blood lead testing and dental screening requirements. Parents must show that children entering kindergarten have been tested for dangerous levels of lead in their blood. High blood lead levels can cause learning disabilities. Parents of children entering kindergarten must also show they have received a screening for dental disease.

Parents of children entering the ninth grade must show their children have received a screening for dental disease.

No child will be prevented from attending school without proof of blood lead testing and dental screenings. If families have difficulty meeting the requirements, IDPH and local public health will provide assistance to children and schools to ensure that the necessary dental and lead screenings are obtained. IDPH encourages parents of children entering kindergarten or ninth grade to contact their health provider to check their child’s records and make appointments for check-ups if necessary.

For more information on dental screenings, visit www.idph.state.ia.us/hpcdp/oral_health_school_screening.asp.

To learn more about childhood lead poisoning prevention and testing, visit www.idph.state.ia.us/eh/lead_poisoning_prevention.asp or call 800-972-2026.