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***Mayor Fulop and the Department of Health & Human Services Expand Blood Lead Screening in the Wake of Superstorm Sandy Through a \$500,000 NJ Department of Health Grant, the Largest in the State***

***City and JCMC to Host Lead Poisoning Prevention Workshop with Nationally Recognized Speakers as Mayor Fulop Continues to Create a Healthier Jersey City for Residents***

JERSEY CITY – Mayor Steven M. Fulop and the Department of Health and Human Services, Partnership for a Healthier JC are expanding lead screenings for children as part of \$500,000 New Jersey Department of Health grant to combat the rise of blood lead in Sandy affected areas that resulted when lead paint in historic housing stock became airborne. Jersey City received the largest grant in the state and has been conducting screenings and providing outreach in Jersey City and greater Hudson County.

The outreach includes a **Lead Poisoning Prevention Health Convening** to be held from **12 p.m. to 2 p.m. Wednesday, April 22, 2015** at the **Jersey City Medical Center Annex, 350 Montgomery Street**. The conference will feature nationally recognized speakers on the topic of lead poisoning prevention, including three leading doctors and an Environmental Health Officer with the U.S. Public Health Service, and will highlight the city’s efforts to reach more communities.

Although the conference is geared toward health care professionals and those who work with children, the general public is invited to attend and learn more about Jersey City’s lead prevention program.

“Events like Superstorm Sandy create immediate and long-term health challenges that must be addressed proactively,” said **Mayor Fulop**. “This substantial grant and our work to raise awareness about blood lead screening are important steps toward ensuring that no child’s forward progress is impacted by a family’s inability to abate historic construction issues.”

In the wake of Superstorm Sandy, communities throughout Hudson County bordering the Hudson River experienced major flooding and building damage that exposed lead paint in its older housing stock making it airborne. As a result, these areas are more susceptible to higher levels of blood lead and the need for increased screenings. In Jersey City, a dangerous spike in the lead levels as a result of the hurricane impacted four housing sites, 40 schools and 143 day care centers.

While the Department of Health and Human Services provides free blood lead screenings to uninsured children year round, the state grant has allowed the city to expand screenings to include residents of Hudson County and adults as well.

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“Since Hurricane Sandy, I have seen an increase in lead poisoning in patients at my own practice, and I am very pleased that Jersey City is being proactive on this issue and received significant funding to help combat this in our region to maintain the health and welfare of our children,” said **Dr. Vijaya Desai, a Jersey City pediatrician and volunteer with the Partnership of a Healthier JC**. “Blood lead poisoning effects the nervous system, so the sooner we are able to diagnose it, the better we are able to combat it.”

According to the Center for Disease control and the World Health Organization, 500,000 children in the United States have blood lead levels above a safe reference range when tested for lead. A hazardous, heavy metal found in the environment, lead is most commonly found in paint and lead dust, potentially causing a neurological disorder that may damage the bones and soft tissue. Lead screenings are typically focused on children as their growing bodies absorb lead much easier than adults and because a child’s brain and nervous system is more susceptible to the effects of lead poisoning.

“We are collaborating with the Jersey City Department of Health and Human Services on an ongoing basis to assess and address community needs together,” said **Joseph F. Scott, FACHE, President and CEO of Jersey City Medical Center-Barnabas Health**. “Our joint Health Convening on Lead Poisoning Prevention is just one example of how partnering strengthens outreach and awareness in Jersey City as we work together to create a healthier city.”

Other Health Department programs and educational materials will be made available for workshop participants, including the Cooking Matters at the Store program, the Adopt-A-Lot program, and the city’s Afterschool Meals program. Find out how you can volunteer and become part of the movement for a Healthier JC.

#### **Speakers Line Up for the April 22<sup>nd</sup> Lead Poisoning Prevention Health Convening:**

**Dr. Phillip Landrigan** is a pediatrician and epidemiologist who spent over 30 years researching the impacts on children’s health of exposures to toxic chemicals in the environment. His research has been especially focused on studying the neurobehavioral consequences of exposures in early development. Dr. Landrigan’s landmark study resulted in a federal ban on lead in paint and gasoline in 1978. Landrigan has chaired two National Academy of Sciences committees that were instrumental in translating emerging knowledge of the health impacts of developmental toxicants into public policy – the Committee on Neurotoxicology and Risk Assessment (1987-1999) and the Committee on Pesticides in the Diets of Infants and Children (1988-1993).

**Dr. Maida Galvez** is a nationally recognized expert in environmental pediatrics. Her specific clinical and research interests have been childhood obesity and obesity related complications including metabolic syndrome. She was one of the first trainees in Environmental Pediatrics in the United States, through the Academic Pediatrics Association funded Environmental Pediatrics Fellowship at Mount Sinai. She has been a co-investigator in two research projects involving environmental exposures and children’s growth and development. This research has included her own unique interests in macro and micro environmental factors, focusing on neighborhood factors in the urban built environment and environmental endocrine disruptor exposures, potential modifiable factors which show promise for future public health interventions.

**Dr. John Meyer, MD, MPH** – is Associate Professor and Director of the Occupational Medicine Residency Program at Mount Sinai. His current areas of research interest are in the physical and psychosocial hazards of working in pregnant women, and in the health effects of social disparities that arise from occupation. While previously at the UConn School of Medicine, he established a consultation service in occupational and environmental reproductive hazards for working pregnant women and those concerned with exposures prior to conception, and developed guidance documents on environmental reproductive hazards, including the nail salon and beauty industry, for pregnant women and their medical caregivers.

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**Lieutenant Commander Elena Vaouli** is an Environmental Health Officer with the U.S. Public Health Service. Currently, she serves as an Environmental Health Scientist for the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry Region 2 Office in New York/New Jersey. Over the past two years, LCDR Vaouli has developed and advanced the “soilSHOP” concept to promote collaborative environmental health interventions to reduce community exposures to lead in urban soils. She holds a BS degree in Biology from The Catholic University of America and an MPH in Environmental Health Science from Johns Hopkins University.

**Light lunch will be served to all attendees. Admission is free and RSVPs are recommended by calling HHS at 201-547-6800.**

**The Immunization Clinic is located at the HHS Campus, 199 Summit Avenue and tests on Tuesdays and Thursdays between the hours of 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., except on governmental holidays. No appointment is necessary.**

**All media inquiries should be directed to Jennifer Morrill, Press Secretary to Mayor Steven M. Fulop at [201-547-4836](tel:201-547-4836) or [201-376-0699](tel:201-376-0699). ////**