

Fayette authority offers program to remove lead-based paint

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The Fayette County Redevelopment Authority is offering assistance to homeowners and tenants to remove lead paint hazards from their homes.

The lead hazard control program offers up to \$8,000 in financial assistance to families living outside the cities of Uniontown and Connellsville and meet the program's income guidelines, said Andrew French, authority executive director. The two cities have redevelopment authorities that offer similar programs for their residents.

"The authority's goal is to rehabilitate a minimum of four homes per quarter, or 23 homes by the time the program ends in 2015," said French.

Since October 2009, the authority has assisted about 50 homeowners or tenants in removing the lead-based paint hazards.

French said that it is especially important for families living in homes built prior to 1978 to apply, because lead-based paint was used during that time frame.

Of the 63,000 housing units within the county, 49,000 — or 78 percent — were built prior to 1978, when the use of lead-based paint in residential homes was stopped.

"If the problem has not been addressed already, there is a potential for lead-based paint being in the home," said French.

According to the authority, lead poisoning symptoms are hard to identify and can resemble the cold or flu. Lead exposure can harm unborn children.

Undetected, children with high blood-lead levels can suffer from brain and nervous system damage, behavior and learning problems, slowed growth, hearing problems and headaches, according to the state Department of Health.

Because of the dangers, applicants must have children that are age 6 or younger.

Homeowners must have satisfactory credit, be current on all property taxes and mortgage payments, have a current homeowner's insurance policy and not have an open bankruptcy.

Renters with a child age 6 or under with an elevated blood-lead level may also apply.

Program participants will not be required to pay an application fee. If the grant does not cover the related costs to bring the home into compliance with local building codes, additional money may be available through the authority's homeowner rehabilitation loan program, said French.

The work will include a property inspection to identify risks and all needed repairs.

Children may also be tested for elevated blood levels.

For additional information or to apply for the program, call the authority at 724-437-1547 or visit its website at racfpa.org.