

Drinking water sampling for lead in Delaware schools

Delaware is working with federal and local partners to ensure all children and school staff have safe and clean drinking water. This document provides an overview of next steps for the State of Delaware water sampling initiative to identify and respond to lead levels in school drinking water.

Overview

With the support of a grant from the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Delaware Department of Education (DOE) with support from the Delaware Division of Public Health (DPH) began a sampling initiative in Delaware schools in October 2020 to identify the levels of lead within the drinking water system. This is the first time all school facilities had their drinking water sampled for the presence of lead, outside routine monitoring by the individual water systems serving schools.

As of early 2022, every school in Delaware had been sampled and the initial results were analyzed by the Delaware Public Health Laboratory (DPHL).

Initial sample results indicate lead may only be an issue at a limited number of fixtures in a small number of schools, but further steps are being taken to reduce risk. Delaware is contracting with a local environmental firm to collect samples that will be analyzed by an independent lab. This sampling effort will help identify the source of lead, better gauge risk, and guide next steps. DPH is working directly with schools and districts to provide short- and long- term recommendations based on initial sampling and resampling results. EPA is supporting Delaware by providing training and serving as a technical resource as we move forward.

Proposed Plan

Over the next six months, every public-school consumption point will be tested for lead.

- **State-funded sampling:** Delaware is moving forward with state-funded sampling using an independent contractor and analytical laboratory. To ensure proper sampling conditions, no sampling will be conducted during extended breaks.
 - Sampling will be conducted at every consumption point in all public schools in the state. Additionally, all non-consumption points that originally tested at or above 7.5 ppb will be retested.
 - Schools with elevated levels at or above 7.5 ppb will be prioritized for December 2022; all sampling is expected to be completed by end of February 2023.
 - Results, which will be returned no more than 14 days after sampling, will be provided to DOE, DPH and districts/charters as they are received.
 - Results summary will include immediate steps and recommendations based on sampling (fixture replacement, signage, further sampling, etc.).

- All consumption points that test at or above 7.5 ppb will be turned off or posted as “do not consume” pending remediation.
- DOE and DPH will provide districts/charters with remediation support.
- Planning for long-term monitoring will begin as the SB 270 assessment tool development commences.
- Current cost estimate is \$5,500 per school, not to exceed \$1.5M, which the state is funding. Schools wishing to have non-consumption points and non-student buildings tested may do so at an extra cost paid for by the district/charter.
- Sampling will be conducted in compliance with EPA’s 3Ts (Training, Testing, and Taking Action) and the Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP).
- **Enhanced communications:** Regular, consistent communications will be provided to the general public, districts and charter schools, and stakeholders. A communications plan is [attached](#).
 - Prior to resampling:
 - DOE will provide updates to superintendents and charter leaders.
 - Sampling requirements and logistics will be communicated by DOE to district and charter school building managers.
 - Districts and charters will receive communications support from DOE to further engage school boards and communities.
 - During sampling:
 - All results will be shared as received with districts and charters; immediate steps will be facilitated if elevated samples are found through sampling. DOE will coordinate this messaging with DPH.
 - Districts and charters will share results and any next steps with their school boards, staffs, families, and communities.
 - Updates will be regularly posted on de.gov/schoolwater.
 - Post sampling
 - Any remediation and resampling updates will be communicated following the project communication plan so all stakeholders receive timely information.
 - Districts and charters will be engaged in [Senate Bill 270](#) transition discussions as the assessment tool is developed. (Process slated to begin Feb/March 2023.)
- **EPA WIIN Grant:** DOE and DPH are working with EPA to successfully complete Delaware’s grant.
 - DOE is amending grant documents to allow use of funds for contract lab and remediation.
 - DOE’s Quality Assurance Project Plan has been approved by the EPA.
 - EPA is providing subject matter expertise to DPH on lead sampling, source ID and remediation to best support districts and charters.
- **Early child care facilities:** The planning to determine best approach and funding for early child care center drinking water sampling for lead levels will begin in early 2023. This initiative is logistically more challenging than school sampling because early child care centers include more locations, private property matters and, currently, less remediation funding.

School Water Testing Communications Plan

Delaware Department of Education

Communications Action	Target Audience	Objectives	Schedule	Strategies	DOE Contact
Community and Public Outreach	Legislators	Share project updates, answer questions, address concerns	Minimum quarterly	Email updates and/or legislative briefings	Emily Cunningham
Community and Public Outreach	General Public	Share project updates, raise awareness, encourage engagement with districts/charters for school-specific information	As needed	de.gov/schoolwater , social media, Take Note, media	Alison May
Community and Public Outreach	Lead Advocates	Share project updates, answer questions, address concerns	As needed	Childhood Lead Poisoning Advisory Committee (CLPAC) sub-committee meeting	Jamie Mack
District/Charter Outreach	District/charter leadership	Share project updates, encourage local communication	Minimum quarterly	Weekly memo, chief/charter leader meetings	Kim Klein
District/Charter Outreach	Facilities Leads	Provide project updates and technical assistance, answer questions, address concerns	Minimum monthly	SPIE meetings, DOE/DPH office hours,	Jamie Mack
District/Charter Outreach	Public information officers	Encourage sharing information with families and staff	As needed	Prepared materials for use in local communication vehicles	Alison May
School-specific Outreach	District/charter leadership	Share sampling results, encourage communication with school communities	Within 2 days of receipt	Email to facility leads and school/district/charter leadership	Jamie Mack
School-specific Outreach	Public information officers	Encourage sharing information with families and staff	Within 2 days of receipt	Prepared materials for use in local communication vehicles	Alison May
Notification of Sampling Results	General Public	Share results, raise awareness, answer questions/concerns	As needed	de.gov/schoolwater	Jamie Mack
Technical Assistance	District/charter staff	Provide project documentation, resources and support	As needed	Prepared materials provided to districts and charters	Jamie Mack