



LEAD PROGRESS REPORT

MEASURABLE ACTION. MEANINGFUL RESULTS.

Protecting children. Strengthening homes. Moving our community forward.

PRESENTED TO THE COMMUNITY OCTOBER 2026



Dear Neighbors,

Lead poisoning is one of the most well-understood public health hazards in our nation. We know where risks exist, how children are exposed, the lasting consequences, and most importantly how to prevent it.

When I became County Executive, I made it clear that the status quo was no longer acceptable. In response, **we replaced piecemeal efforts with a comprehensive, strategic approach that addresses hazards at their source, bolsters prevention efforts, supports families, and strengthens the systems designed to keep children safe.**

A major priority this past year was expanding the certified workforce able to safely address lead hazards. **The County funded EPA-certified Lead-Safe Work Practices trainings for contractors, landlords, and property owners, increasing local capacity and ensuring repairs were completed safely.**

We also made testing more accessible and responsive. While children should be screened through their healthcare providers, the Health Department fills gaps by bringing mobile, point-of-care testing directly into neighborhoods and schools. **In 2024 and 2025, we conducted the first school-based testing initiative of its kind in New York State.** Across 18 schools, 531 children were tested, with five identified as having elevated blood lead levels. Any child with elevated blood lead is connected to a dedicated case coordinator to identify and address exposure and support healthier outcomes, including making homes safer when hazards are found.

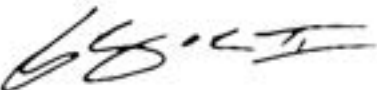
Significant progress was also made in housing support. Planning and investment in 2025 laid the groundwork for the March 2026 opening of Howard's House, the County's first lead-safe temporary housing program. This initiative ensures families have a safe place to stay during remediation. Meanwhile, the Lead Hazard Reduction Program continued replacing high-risk components in eligible pre-1978 homes, with priority for households that have pregnant women and/or young children.

Public outreach remained a core component, with continued participation in education fairs, community sessions, contractor events, and the County's "Leading on Lead" initiative. **My administration has also secured the critical financial resources needed, including \$13 million in federal grants and an additional \$12 million in local County resources, representing more than \$25 million invested in lead poisoning prevention and abatement, the largest commitment in County history.**

Close collaboration with New York State and the City of Syracuse further strengthened this work through coordinated inspections, enforcement, and prevention efforts in high-risk neighborhoods.

In 2025, we built on a strong foundation and continued driving progress defined by prevention, action, and accountability. **In 2026, we remain committed to ensuring every child in every neighborhood can grow up in a safe and healthy home.**

Sincerely,



J. Ryan McMahon, II
Onondaga County Executive



J. Ryan McMahon, II, has served as Onondaga County Executive since 2018, leading major initiatives to protect children from lead exposure and expand opportunity for low-income families. He has worked closely with state and local partners to advance lead-safety efforts, secure significant federal and county investments for remediation, and create safe transitional housing for families during abatement work. A lifelong Central New Yorker, McMahon also champions programs that strengthen economic mobility, expand childcare access, and improve housing stability, reflecting his commitment to supporting families and building a healthier, more equitable community.

Dear Community Members, Partners, and Stakeholders,

I am pleased to share the Onondaga County Lead Initiatives 2025 Annual Report. **Protecting children from lead exposure remains one of our highest priorities**, and this report reflects the progress we've made through prevention, early detection, and rapid response when a child is at risk.

Even small amounts of lead can affect a child's development, learning, and behavior. **Testing is the only way to know whether a child has been exposed. When results show the need for follow-up, our team acts quickly with confirmatory testing, clinical review, and home environmental investigation. Every family is supported by a dedicated case coordinator who helps them navigate the process and move toward safer outcomes.**

We focus on finding and addressing sources of lead exposure early, especially in older homes where lead-based paint is most common. Through home inspections, family education, and connections to remediation resources, we help reduce hazards before they harm children.

This work is strengthened by close collaboration with community and state partners who help expand access to grants, training, and trusted information. Together, we've built the workforce and systems needed to protect families county-wide.

The progress in this report is the result of dedicated staff, unprecedented County investment, engaged families, and community partners who share our commitment to protecting children from preventable harm. **By staying focused on early detection and collaboration, we are building a healthier future for every child in Onondaga County.**

Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,



Dr. Katie Anderson



Kathryn Anderson, MD, PhD, MSPH, is an internist, epidemiologist, and physician-scientist with two decades of global infectious-disease research. Her work with CDC, the U.S. Army, and SUNY Upstate's COVID-19 response shaped her public health focus, preparing her to serve since 2022 as Onondaga County's Health Commissioner, leading efforts in health promotion, disease prevention, and health equity.



WHAT WE DO—AND WHY IT MATTERS.

The Onondaga County Health Department plays a central role in protecting children from lead paint exposure through testing support, case management, home inspections, and public education.

Because every family and property situation is different, lead poisoning prevention is not always a linear process. Some families enter through testing services, while others begin with an inspection, community referral, or remediation program. Regardless of where the process starts, the County's goal remains the same: Identify risks early, intervene quickly, and connect families with the resources needed to create safer, healthier homes.

Through collaboration between educators, care coordinators, inspectors, healthcare providers, and housing partners, the County works to address both the health impacts and environmental conditions associated with lead exposure.

LEAD POISONING PREVENTION INITIATIVES

Families and properties may enter the process at different stages depending on testing results, referrals, or housing conditions.



Testing & Surveillance

The Health Department supports childhood lead testing efforts, reviews test results reported through NYSDOH, and provides community-based testing services.

Case Identification & Public Health Response

Elevated blood lead levels (≥ 5 mcg/dL) trigger public health intervention, follow-up coordination, and family outreach.

Care Coordination & Family Support

Care coordinators help families navigate the process, schedule follow-up testing, and reduce exposure risks through prevention guidance and education.

Property Inspection and Lead Hazard Assessment

EPA-certified inspectors investigate homes and identify potential lead exposure sources and environmental hazards that may require corrective action or remediation.

Remediation Resources

Eligible families and property owners may be connected to remediation programs, including the Lead Hazard Reduction Grant Program and the Windows, Doors, and More initiative.

Education & Prevention

Families and property owners receive ongoing education about lead-safe practices, prevention strategies, and available community resources.



INVESTING IN PREVENTION. BUILDING SAFER COMMUNITIES.

Since 2022, Onondaga County has invested more than \$25 million in lead poisoning prevention, remediation, workforce development, testing, outreach, and housing initiatives.

These investments are helping the County:

- Expand lead-safe remediation programs
- Train more EPA-certified contractors
- Increase access to testing and inspections
- Support families during remediation

Together, local County and grant funding are driving the largest coordinated lead poisoning prevention effort in County history—protecting children, strengthening homes, and improving community health across Onondaga County.

LOCAL INVESTMENT

Includes

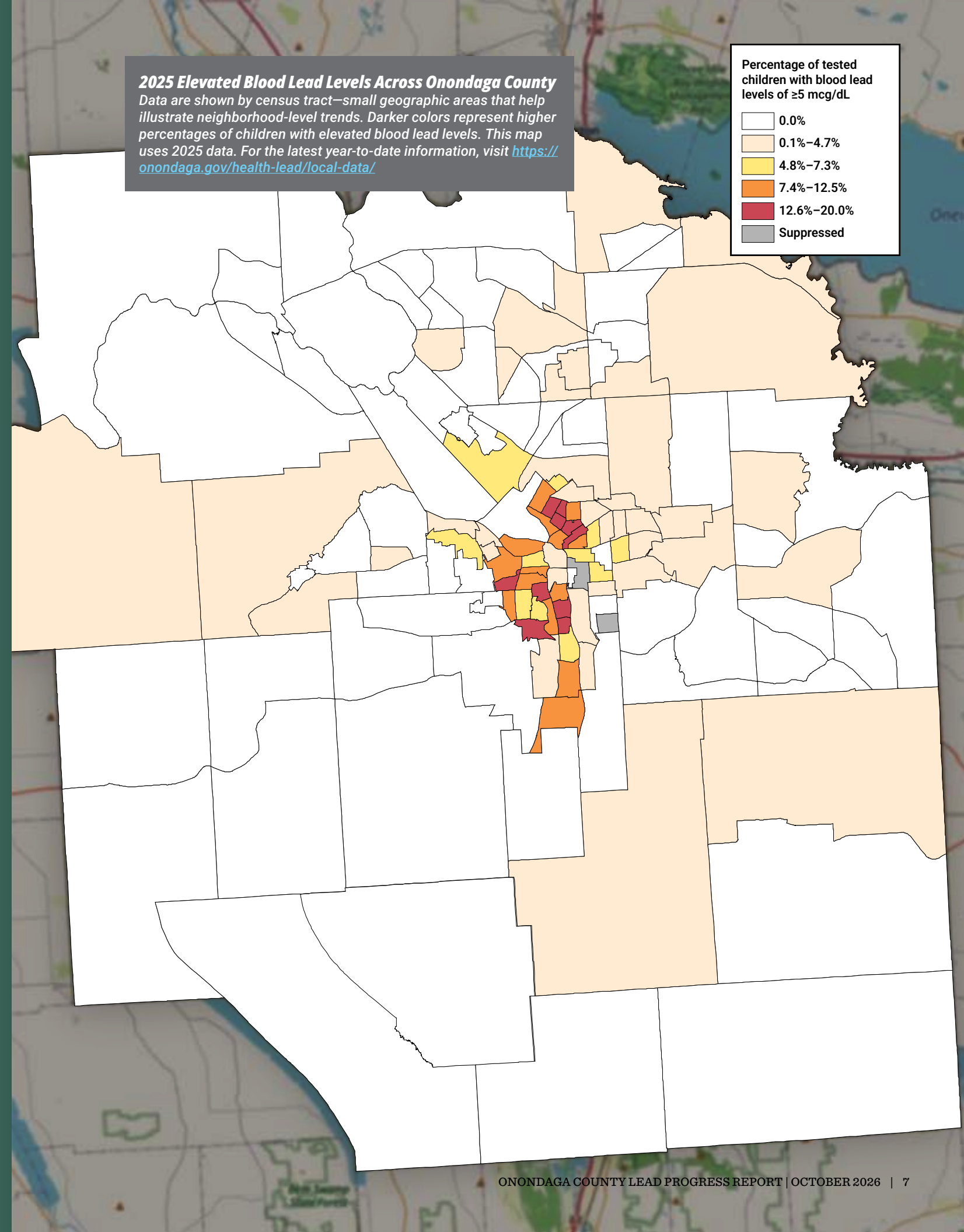
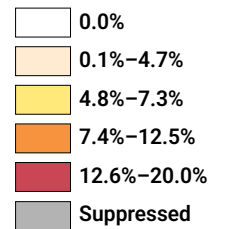
\$25M → **\$13M** + **\$12M**

total investment in lead poisoning prevention since 2022. in federal grants in local county resources

2025 Elevated Blood Lead Levels Across Onondaga County

Data are shown by census tract—small geographic areas that help illustrate neighborhood-level trends. Darker colors represent higher percentages of children with elevated blood lead levels. This map uses 2025 data. For the latest year-to-date information, visit <https://onondaga.gov/health-lead/local-data/>

Percentage of tested children with blood lead levels of ≥5 mcg/dL



INITIATIVES IN ACTION.

PRE-K LEAD-TESTING INITIATIVE

In response to concerns about potential lead exposure in school water systems, Onondaga County conducted a targeted testing initiative within Syracuse City School District Pre-K programs in the Spring/Fall of 2024 and the Spring of 2025. All children with elevated results received follow-up care in accordance with New York State health requirements.

531 children tested across 18 schools with Pre-K classrooms. **1.3%** had an elevated fingerstick result at the time of testing.

WINDOWS AND DOORS INITIATIVE

This proactive program targets housing units built before 1980 to reduce lead hazards by addressing common risk areas such as windows and doors. The program operates in partnership with Home HeadQuarters, which manages contractor bidding and project implementation.

826 windows replaced since 2024 **84** doors replaced since 2024 **5** housing units completed **48** units currently in progress

FOSTER CARE UNITS

County-funded lead hazard reduction helps remove barriers for families interested in foster care by addressing lead hazards in their homes. To date, 11 homes have been completed and 3 more are in the pipeline, expanding safe placement options for children under six.

HUD LEAD HAZARD REDUCTION GRANT

Helps identify and remediate lead-based paint hazards in privately owned rental and owner-occupied homes. In 2025, Onondaga County received its largest HUD award to date—helping make hundreds of homes safer for children and families.

\$7.7M largest grant ever **270** unit goal **91** completed **143** in pipeline

WINDOWS, DOORS, AND MORE

Helps property owners address lead hazards identified through Health Department inspections by funding remediation and abatement work in older homes. The program combines state and local investment to proactively reduce lead exposure risks and improve housing safety throughout the community.

\$1.3M pilot award **\$827K** additional 2025 funding **\$1.0M** additional 2026 funding





BY THE NUMBERS—DATA/TRENDS.

Lead exposure continues to decline across Onondaga County, reflecting sustained testing and intervention efforts. We recognize that any amount of lead exposure is too much. Focused efforts are now closing the remaining gaps in higher-risk areas, including Syracuse, where continued investment is driving progress.

CHILDREN SCREENED IN 2025

10,026 ensuring earlier detection and faster support for families.

2025 DISTRIBUTION OF BLOOD LEAD LEVELS

While most children tested had blood lead levels below the intervention threshold, elevated blood lead levels continue to disproportionately impact children in Syracuse.

9.1% **0.8%**

of children tested in Syracuse had elevated blood lead levels (≥ 5 mcg/dL)

of children tested outside Syracuse had elevated blood lead levels (≥ 5 mcg/dL)

Higher-level exposures remain less common but require targeted intervention.

LONG-TERM PROGRESS

Since 2016, elevated blood lead cases have declined significantly:

742 → 452
(2016 cases) (2025 cases)

Elevated blood lead cases have dropped by nearly 40% since 2016.



EXPANDING THE LOCAL CONTRACTOR WORKFORCE.

A growing network of 550+ certified professionals is now accelerating lead-safe repairs across the county.

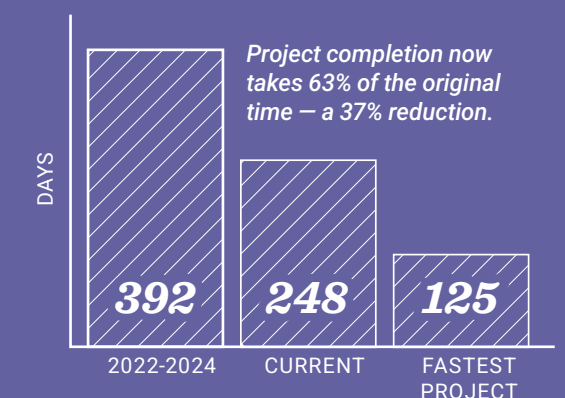
This expanded contractor pool has helped reduce timelines for homes remediated through the County's grant-funded programs.

REMEDATION TIMELINES HAVE BEEN CUT BY OVER ONE-THIRD—GETTING FAMILIES BACK INTO SAFE HOMES FASTER.

392 DAYS
2022–2024 to

248 DAYS
current median

125 DAYS
fastest completion time



TIMELINE OF TYPICAL PROCESS FOR HOME REMEDIATION GRANTS



PREVENTION STARTS WITH AWARENESS.

Education remains a critical component of preventing childhood lead exposure. Across Onondaga County, outreach efforts focus on delivering clear, actionable information and connecting families to the services that help reduce risk. These efforts take place directly in the community and through trusted local partnerships.



Meet Leo the Lion

Onondaga County's lead poisoning prevention pal, Leo, helps kids and families learn simple ways to stay safe from lead, from washing hands and toys to staying away from peeling paint and dust. As a friendly guide, Leo also helps ease fears around lead testing, making the experience more comfortable for children and their families.

Public Health Educators regularly attend community events and outreach opportunities to:

- Educate families about lead risks
- Promote blood lead testing
- Connect residents with home inspection and remediation resources

Outreach also includes collaboration with community organizations and healthcare providers. Key partners include:

- Head Start and childcare providers
- WIC (Special Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, & Children)
- SUNY Upstate Golisano Children's Hospital programs
- Community health coalitions and advocacy organizations

In 2025 our team completed:

- 21 presentations
- 64 community outreach events at 60 unique locations



STORIES OF IMPACT ON OUR COMMUNITY.

RESTORING A FAMILY HOME.

Homeowner | Taylor

For over 100 years, this home has been passed down through generations. But after discovering that Taylor's children—and a nephew—had experienced lead poisoning linked to the house, that legacy was put at risk.

"Living with that knowledge was a long and difficult struggle," Taylor said.

Through an Onondaga County grant, Taylor was able to repair and restore the home. Throughout the process, the team treated both the home and family with compassion, care, and respect.

The timing carried deep emotional weight. Taylor learned funding had been approved just one day after the passing of her husband's grandmother—the matriarch who helped shape the home's legacy. Today, that home is safe again.

Now restored, it can continue to be passed down—this time without the hidden dangers that once threatened the family's health.

"Our family home is now safe and preserved, allowing us to continue our legacy in a healthy environment," Taylor said.



BUILDING A SAFER WORKFORCE.

Contractor | Kennedy — Heading Home Property Services

Kennedy entered the County's lead program after seeing firsthand how difficult it was to find properly trained contractors to address lead violations. Instead of walking away, he leaned in.

After connecting with the County, Kennedy enrolled in contractor training—and brought his team with him. Through the program, they became EPA-certified and began applying lead-safe practices in their work.

"The course was very educational and I was able to put that training into practice right away," Kennedy said.

Today, his company not only completes remediation work, but also helps educate homeowners about lead safety—extending the program's impact beyond the jobsite.

For Kennedy, the work is about more than compliance. It's about community.

"I really enjoy knowing that the County and my company have made another house safer," Kennedy said. "This program makes Syracuse housing safer for everyone."



IDENTIFYING RISK. ENABLING ACTION.

Lead Risk Assessor & Trainer | Daryl — Eco-Testing Services, LLC

With more than 13 years of experience as a certified Lead Risk Assessor, Daryl has spent his career on the front lines of identifying lead hazards in homes across Onondaga County. Since 2013, his work with County programs has focused on one critical step: finding the problem early so it can be fixed.

"Identifying hazards is the first step in getting those issues corrected," Daryl said.

Through inspections and testing, Daryl helps create a clear path to remediation—ensuring families, especially children, are protected from exposure.

In recent years, his role has expanded to training contractors, helping grow the local workforce and improving how lead-safe work is performed across the region.

His approach is practical and grounded: Small changes in how work is done can make a significant difference in safety—for both workers and the families they serve.

"Just a few practical changes can make a significant difference in safety," Daryl said.



HOWARD'S HOUSE.

Howard's House is named in honor of Dr. Howard Weinberger, a pediatrician and nationally recognized expert on childhood lead poisoning who served Syracuse-area children and families for more than 50 years. Through his clinical care, research, and leadership of Upstate's Regional Lead Resource Center, he helped pioneer approaches to identifying, monitoring, and treating children with elevated blood lead levels. His work shaped regional and statewide practices in lead poisoning prevention and treatment, leaving a lasting legacy in child and environmental health.

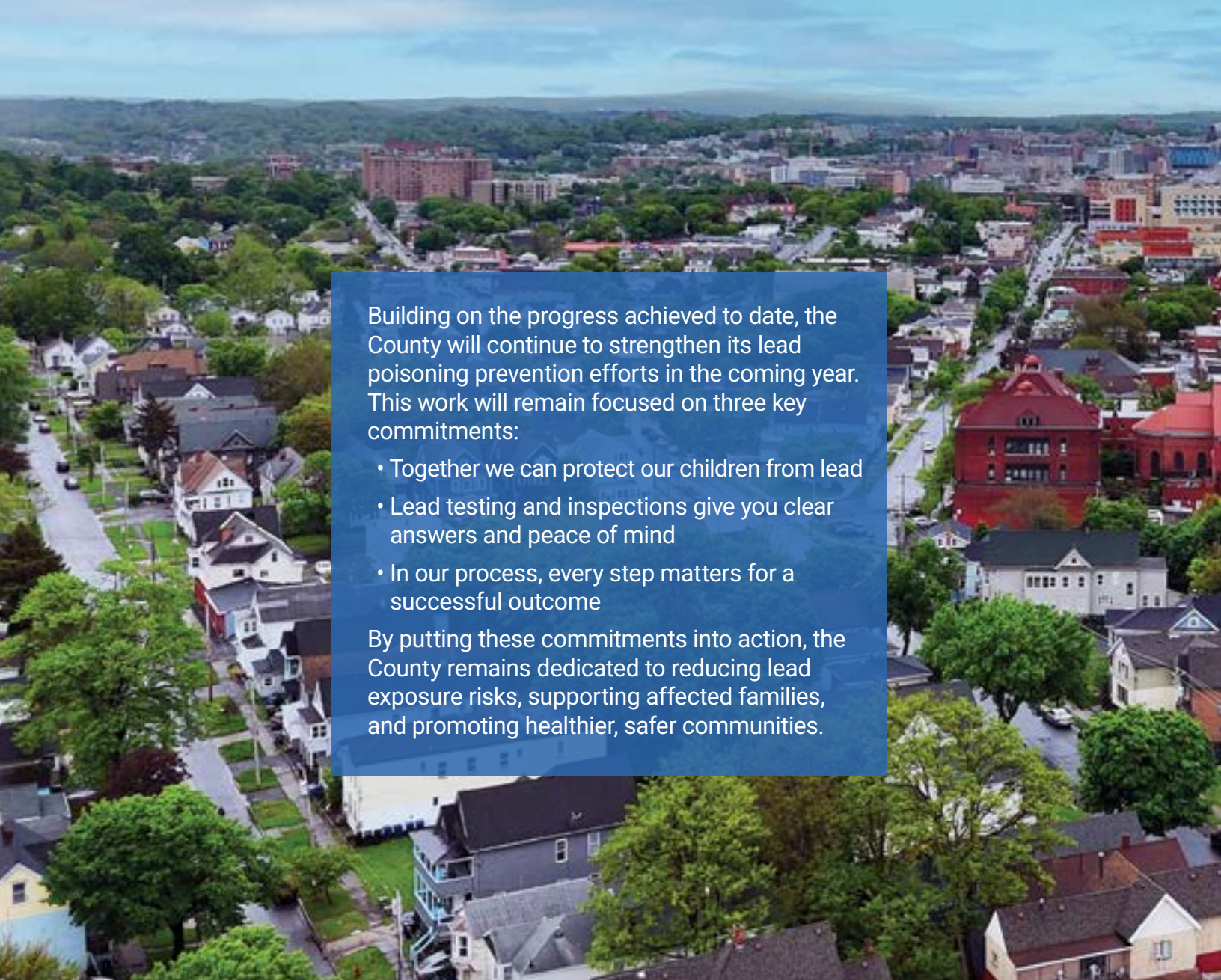
The property was renovated through a partnership among Onondaga County, Home HeadQuarters, Inc., and the City of Syracuse. Onondaga County Health Department staff work together throughout families' entire experience at Howard's House. Whether through grant programming, care coordination, or required testing, Howard's House is an embodiment of all the resources our team offers.



Howard's House is a specialized, four-unit short-stay residence in Syracuse that provides lead-safe temporary housing. Families whose children have elevated blood lead levels and cannot safely return home after hospitalization, as well as families referred through lead hazard reduction programs while remediation work is underway, may be eligible to stay at the residence.



*Dr. Howard Weinberger
pictured at Howard's House.*



Building on the progress achieved to date, the County will continue to strengthen its lead poisoning prevention efforts in the coming year. This work will remain focused on three key commitments:

- Together we can protect our children from lead
- Lead testing and inspections give you clear answers and peace of mind
- In our process, every step matters for a successful outcome

By putting these commitments into action, the County remains dedicated to reducing lead exposure risks, supporting affected families, and promoting healthier, safer communities.

BUILDING ON PROGRESS

For more information and for year-to-date data, visit us at onondaga.gov/health-lead/

