ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH POLICY STUDY: AN ASSESSMENT OF REGULATORY LAWS

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Abstract: The capability to realize the extent of environmental health risks involved with lead poisoning has advanced on a vast scale. Lead, a toxic metal which may be detrimental to one’s health especially the health of a child, is a global problem. Lead-based paint in homes, especially dilapidated homes, remains a risk factor for lead poisoning. In recent advancements of environmental health, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in conjunction with the Environmental Protection Agency has implemented policies and statues to require disclosure of any known lead-based paint and or lead-based paint hazards prior to renovation by sellers. This includes any person selling, leasing or renovating housing constructed prior to 1978 which is financially assisted by the federal government or which may be sold by the government. Although reports indicate that several states have compiled to these policies, data are sparse on laws in Mississippi, where a large majority of residents are underserved and living in old dilapidated homes. In the present study, we evaluated whether or not lead regulatory laws have been implemented in the state of Mississippi to determine the need for such regulations to better protect families, especially children. We hypothesized that, if adopted, lead laws had not been implemented. To test this hypothesis, evaluation methods consisted of research and identification of current laws, regulations, ordinances, codes, and policies needed to address health and safety issues in homes, means to enforce existing regulations, and strategies to approach collaboration with the proper authorities to address healthy home issues. Regulations evaluated were the Residential Land Lord Tenant Act, HUD Disclosure Rule, Pre-Renovation Disclosure Rule, Renovation Repair and Painting, Elimination of Lead in Drinking Water, and Nuisance Clause. The findings support the hypothesis in that few of these laws were implemented in Mississippi, therefore, leaving a population at risk for lead exposure and adverse health effects. In conclusion, recommendations of how policy weaknesses may be redeveloped and implemented to promote prevention of environmental hazards; strategies to educate legislators about childhood lead poisoning and other home hazards; and the proposal of amendments to policies through legislature were made as a prominent goal of eliminating lead poisoning through the advancements of environmental health.

Key Words: Lead Poisoning, Regulatory Laws, Homes, Lead-based Paint

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