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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 17, 2006

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GOVERNOR BUSH DECLARES OCTOBER 22-28, CHILDHOOD LEAD POISONING PREVENTION WEEK

-Screening young children for lead exposure is highly recommended-

TALLAHASSEE – To raise awareness about the irreversible effects of childhood lead poisoning, the Florida Department of Health (DOH) and the Florida Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) declare October 22-28 as Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Week. Lead exposure can cause growth, developmental, learning, and behavioral problems for young children. National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week highlights the importance of educating parents and children about the dangers associated with lead poisoning.

“There is nothing more important than the health and safety of Florida’s children,” said DOH Secretary M. Rony François, M.D., M.S.P.H., Ph.D. “We must increase awareness of the environmental hazards associated with lead poisoning. Through furthering prevention activity, we can continue working towards the goal of eliminating lead poisoning in our most vulnerable populations.”

AHCA Secretary Alan Levine added, “We must continue to increase Florida’s awareness of the importance of blood lead testing for the health and safety of our children.”

All children under the age of 72 months are potentially at risk for lead poisoning because of hand-to-mouth activity. Blood tests to screen for lead poisoning are available. DOH and AHCA stress the importance of screening infants and young children and encourage parents to contact their health care provider or local county health department to schedule appointments. Medicaid eligible children are required to be screened at 12 and 24 months of age, and between the ages of 36 and 72 months, if never tested.

Lead dust from old paint and contaminated soil in and around older homes remains the primary exposure threat to children. Other sources of lead exposure include some imported candies, toy jewelry, spices, mini-blinds and home remedies. Parents who are exposed to lead at work or while engaged in a hobby may also inadvertently expose their children to lead by carrying home lead dust on clothes, shoes, or equipment.

From 2001 to 2005, the FL CLPPP surveillance activities showed that 3,491 newly confirmed cases of childhood lead poisoning were reported to the Department of Health. Over 300 new cases were reported in 2005 alone. Case rates are based on targeted physician testing and mandatory laboratory reporting.

Parents can help prevent the exposure of lead poisoning in children by:

- Making sure children wash their hands before eating and sleeping and after playing outside or with toys;
- Cleaning toys and areas such as baseboards and windowsills at least once a week with a damp cloth;



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- Discouraging children from playing in dirt – lead is found in soil; and
 - Providing healthy snacks high in calcium, iron and vitamin C.

It is important for parents to ask their pediatrician about blood lead testing.

The mission of the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program (CLPPP) is to protect the health and cognitive development of all children living in Florida by minimizing childhood exposure to all lead hazards. For more information please visit the DOH Web site at www.doh.state.fl.us/environment/community/lead/index.html. Medicaid's Child Health Check-Up program promotes the early identification and treatment of medical conditions in children before the conditions become serious and disabling. For more information please visit AHCA's website at <http://ahca.myflorida.com>.

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