

Florida's Voluntary Testing Program for Schools and Childcare Facilities: Frequently Asked Questions



- **Where can I find more information about the health effects of lead on children?**
For information on the health effects of lead on children, please visit the [Florida Department of Health's "Information for Parents and Caregivers" web page](#).
- **Why is lead a concern for schools and childcare facilities?**
The "on-again, off-again" nature of water use at most schools can raise lead levels in drinking water. Water that sits overnight, during a weekend, or during periods of school closure like summer or holiday breaks stays in contact with lead pipes or lead solder longer and could contain higher levels of lead. Reducing the amount of lead in drinking water to *as close to zero as possible* is an important part of reducing a child's overall exposure to lead in his or her environment.
- **How does lead enter drinking water?**
Lead in drinking water usually comes from a building's plumbing system. Lead present in solder, brass fixtures, and lead galvanized pipes can leach into water standing in the plumbing system. The amount of lead that leaches into drinking water depends on the corrosiveness of the water as well as the materials used to construct the plumbing system.
- **Are schools and childcare facilities required to test for lead in drinking water?**
Currently, there are no federal regulations that require testing of drinking water in schools and childcare facilities that do not own or operate their own public water system. With the funding appropriated under section 1464(d) of the federal Safe Drinking Water Act, amended by the WIIN Act section 2107, Florida has established a volunteer-based program for testing drinking water lead levels in schools and childcare facilities.
- **What is the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) 3Ts program?**
EPA's 3Ts Program for Reducing Lead in Drinking Water in Schools and Child Care Facilities was developed to assist schools and childcare facilities with lead in their drinking water, and to implement prevention programs using a "3Ts" approach including Training, Testing, and Taking Action. It is intended for use by school officials interested in reducing lead exposure.

- **What is Florida’s Lead Testing in Drinking Water Schools and Childcare Program?**

Florida’s Lead Testing in Drinking Water Schools and Childcare Program is a volunteer-based program for testing drinking water lead levels in schools and childcare facilities. DEP will work with the Department of Education and the Department of Health to communicate the implementation of the program and test results to various stakeholders. The program will also utilize EPA’s 3Ts model of (training, testing and taking action) to train on the risks of lead in drinking water, test using appropriate testing protocols and certified laboratories, and to take action when addressing potential elevated lead where necessary.

- **Which schools/childcare centers are eligible?**

Schools and childcare programs that are defined as an “local education agency” (as defined in section 8101 of Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, 20 U.S.C. 7801); a “tribal education agency” (as defined in section 3 of the National Environmental Education Act, 20 U.S.C. 5502); and a person that owns or operates a childcare program facility. A “childcare program” is as defined in section 103(8) of the Higher Education Act of 1965, 20 U.S.C. 1003(8).

- **How does a school or childcare facility volunteer to participate in Florida’s testing program?**

A school or childcare facility wishing to volunteer to participate in Florida’s Voluntary Lead Testing Program for Schools and Childcare Facilities should contact the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and/or the Florida Department of Education to express its desire to participate.

- **Where will samples be taken?**

Decisions as to where to take samples and how to prioritize the sampling sites should consider drinking fountains, kitchen sinks, filler outlets, classroom combination sinks, home economics room sinks, teachers’ lounge sinks, nurse’s office sinks, and any other sink known to be or visibly used for consumption.

- **Should aerators be removed before collecting samples?**

No; aerators should be left in place.

- **Who will be taking the samples?**

Qualified samplers from a certified laboratory familiar with the program’s two-step sampling procedure. This will be coordinated by program staff.

- **When will the samples be collected?**

Samples need to be collected before the facility opens and before any water is used. Ideally, the water should sit in the pipes unused for at least eight hours but no more than 18 hours before a sample is taken. Steps should be taken to make sure no

water is withdrawn from the outlets prior to sampling. Additionally, restrooms and sinks should not be used on the sampling date prior to sampling occurring.

- **Should my facility flush their water lines before the samples are taken?**

EPA does not recommend flushing before sampling, as it may cause results showing lower than representative lead levels in the water. The 3Ts guidance provides further clarification on when flushing is appropriate during sampling events; for example, when conducting a 30-second follow-up flush sampling or sequential sampling to identify potential lead concerns related to building interior plumbing.

- **When will the testing results be made available, and where will they be posted?**

Testing results and other program information are be accessible from DEP's [Voluntary Lead Testing Program for Schools and Childcare Facilities web page](#).