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## Lead Safe Advisory Board

Documenter name: Tucker Handley

Agency: Lead Safe Advisory Board

Date: Sept. 11, 2025

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## Summary

- The online version of the meeting on Microsoft Teams wasn't fully available due to technical difficulties with sound and video display for about the first 20 minutes.
- The number of children testing positive for lead blood levels greater than 10 micrograms per deciliter (mcg/dL) is down 25% compared to this time last year. Some of that decline is due to fewer tests administered this year, though even when accounting for that, there is still a decrease.
- The [Crowe LLP accounting firm](#) has begun its auditing work of Cleveland's [lead safe program](#), which includes helping to create key performance indicators (KPIs).

## Follow-Up Questions

- Have there been other technical difficulties like this with meetings using Microsoft Teams? I've never seen a meeting like this before, and I didn't know if the platform had anything to do with it.
- What is the lead program that Crowe is auditing? It seems like some specific areas, like the Lead Safe Certificate program, are involved, but is it also just any lead-related activity the city is involved with? I'm a little confused.
- What level of involvement does Crowe have with devising key performance indicators for lead programs? It was very unclear during the meeting, and never seemed to be completely resolved.

## Notes

### Technical difficulties with meeting

This author joined the meeting on Microsoft Teams shortly after 1 p.m., the scheduled start time of the meeting. Several individuals arrived at the meeting over the next 10-15 minutes. There was a lot of on-and-off and fragmented sound during the first 20 minutes of the meeting, and when sound could be heard, it was background noise and not from

the board meeting. During much of the first 20 minutes, nothing was visible except the screens of the other attendees. At some points during this time, slides from a presentation were shown without any sound. The technical difficulties were mostly resolved around 1:20 p.m. (though some sound glitches occurred later in the meeting).

Two additional challenges in covering this meeting were: 1) participants didn't have their cameras on, so it was difficult to identify who was speaking, and 2) it was unclear which participants were board members.

### **Meeting participants**

Here is a list of participants I identified as being in the meeting: Sally Martin O'Toole, director of Building and Housing for the City of Cleveland; Dr. David Margolius, director of the Cleveland Department of Public Health; Rob Fischer, board member, from Case Western Reserve University; Zak Burkons, a lead inspector; Dan Ertle, a lead inspector; Jen Johns, board member, executive director at the Academy of Medicine for Cleveland and Northern Ohio; Etoi Shaquilla Young, Cleveland Department of Public Health; Erin Stoer (spelling unconfirmed); Michelle Wilcox, Cleveland Department of Public Health; Michelle Fenn, lead inspector; and Melissa Cyphert, lead assessor. *[Editor's note: Ward 12 Cleveland City Council Member Rebecca Maurer, a board member, also attended.]*

**Public comments and minutes from the last meeting** - These items were on the meeting agenda, but because of the technical issues mentioned above, I couldn't observe this part of the meeting.

**Quarterly presentation** - Margolius led a [data presentation](#) of lead-related activities in Cleveland so far this year. I didn't see roughly the first half of the presentation in the meeting, so I will just comment on the part of the presentation I was able to see and hear:

- 302 civil tickets for lead violations were issued by the Cleveland Department of Building and Housing through Sept. 6.
- Through August, \$245,000 of a Lead Safe Ohio grant administered by the Ohio Department of Development has been spent, resulting in 53 active applications and 18 abatement jobs completed.
- Regarding lead grants received through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Development Block Grant program, 24 projects have been completed since January. Three projects are under construction, while 40 projects have been assigned to a contractor or vendor.
- Margolius informed the board that 154 children tested with lead levels above 10

mcg/dl (micrograms per deciliter) through Sept. 7, which is a 25% decline from this point last year. *[Editor's note: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention consider a blood lead level of 3.5 mcg/dL or more to be elevated.]*

- Margolius noted that some of this decrease was due to a declining birth rate in Cleveland, which led to fewer children being tested this year. However, the percentage of tests coming back positive has declined by 8%.

**Crowe auditor presentation** - An unidentified individual from the [Crowe LLP accounting firm](#) gave a presentation about an audit of the lead safe programs with the city. This audit by the firm will occur from Sept. 1, 2025, to March 31, 2028, and will:

- Assess program legal compliance
- The effectiveness of the Lead Safe Certification program
- Measuring the efficiency of how the city's resources are used in enforcing the program.

The Crowe representative and the board also discussed data validation work with the audit to ensure that data currently reported with the lead dashboards is accurate. The Crowe representative agreed to quarterly reporting during the course of the audit, with a final audit report at the end.

Much of the discussion centered around the development of key performance indicators (KPIs) for the program. The board hasn't committed to any particular measures. The board debated whether to use comparison data to measure Cleveland against other cities or to create new measures specific for Cleveland. Margolius said that he would bring comparison data to future meetings.

It was also unclear to me whose responsibility it was to develop KPIs. After extensive discussion during the meeting, it appears that Crowe will work with the city to develop KPIs, and will make recommendations for KPIs, but does not have final responsibility for actually creating KPIs. However, this issue didn't seem fully resolved and will be discussed further at the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned unanimously at 2:30 p.m.

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