HUD failed to address lead paint dangers in public housing, report finds

An audit of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) released Monday revealed a shocking lack of oversight by housing agencies across the country with regards to lead-based paint reporting and cleanup.

The audit by the Office of the Inspector General of HUD found that the agency failed to ensure that public housing agencies properly reported and mitigated cases involving children with elevated blood lead levels; established policies and procedures for reporting such cases; and ensured required paint inspections.

As a result of the HUD missteps, Helen M. Albert, principal deputy inspector general, recommended Dominique Blom, the general deputy assistant secretary for Public and Indian Housing, update HUD's regulations to include the inspection and abatement of housing built after 1977 if a child is found to have elevated blood lead levels and update procedures to ensure public housing agencies are following lead-based reporting and protocols.

"We recommend that the General Deputy Assistant Secretary for Public and Indian Housing update HUD's regulations to expand the inspection and abatement requirements … to housing completed after 1977 in cases in which a child with an elevated blood lead level is reported and implement adequate procedures and controls to ensure that public housing agencies comply with the lead safe requirements," said Albert in a release issued on Monday.

Only a week earlier, HUD Secretary Ben Carson announced the launch of "Protect Our Kids!" an enforcement campaign reminding sellers and landlords to disclose the use of lead-based paint in their properties.

"While lead poisoning is entirely preventable, we continue to see far too many children being exposed to lead hazards in their own homes," Carson said earlier this month. "All of us have a responsibility to protect kids, and that includes those who rent or sell older homes that may contain potentially harmful lead."

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As part of the campaign, the department said it's sent six penalty and pre-penalty notices to housing authorities, local governments, property managers and individual landlords who have broken lead-based paint reporting rules.

Even HGTV stars Chip and Joanna Gaines of *Fixer Upper* have been called out for incorrect disposal of lead-based paint. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) fined the couple $40,000 and required Chip to record a video showing the proper way to handle lead-based paint during home renovations.

Email Marian McPherson.

Source: click here