

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-18-394](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

Lead paint in housing is the most common source of lead exposure for U.S. children. HUD awards grants to state and local governments to reduce lead paint hazards in housing and oversees compliance with lead paint regulations in its rental assistance programs. The 2017 Consolidated Appropriations Act, Joint Explanatory Statement, includes a provision that GAO review HUD's efforts to address lead paint hazards. This report examines HUD's efforts to (1) incorporate statutory requirements and other relevant federal standards in its lead grant programs, (2) monitor and enforce compliance with lead paint regulations in its rental assistance programs, (3) adopt federal health guidelines and environmental standards for its lead grant and rental assistance programs, and (4) measure and report on the performance of its lead efforts. GAO reviewed HUD documents and data related to its grant programs, compliance efforts, performance measures, and reporting. GAO also interviewed HUD staff and some grantees.

What GAO Recommends

GAO makes nine recommendations to HUD including to improve lead grant program and compliance monitoring processes, request authority to amend its lead inspection standard in the voucher program, and take additional steps to report on progress. HUD generally agreed with eight of the recommendations. HUD disagreed that it should request authority to use a specific, stricter inspection standard. GAO revised this recommendation to allow HUD greater flexibility to amend its current inspection standard as indicated by analysis of the benefits and costs.

View [GAO-18-394](#). For more information, contact Daniel Garcia-Diaz at (202) 512-8678 or garciadiazd@gao.gov.

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LEAD PAINT IN HOUSING

HUD Should Strengthen Grant Processes, Compliance Monitoring, and Performance Assessment

What GAO Found

The Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) lead grant and rental assistance programs have taken steps to address lead paint hazards, but opportunities exist for improvement. For example, in 2016, HUD began using new tools to monitor how public housing agencies comply with lead paint regulations. However, HUD could further improve efforts in the following areas:

- **Lead grant programs.** While its recent grant award processes incorporate statutory requirements on applicant eligibility and selection criteria, HUD has not fully documented or evaluated these processes. For example, HUD's guidance is not sufficiently detailed to ensure consistent and appropriate grant award decisions. Better documentation and evaluation of HUD's grant program processes could help ensure that lead grants reach areas at risk of lead paint hazards. Further, HUD has not developed specific time frames for using available local-level data to better identify areas of the country at risk for lead paint hazards, which could help HUD target its limited resources.
- **Oversight.** HUD does not have a plan to mitigate and address risks related to noncompliance with lead paint regulations by public housing agencies. We identified several limitations with HUD's monitoring efforts, including reliance on public housing agencies' self-certifying compliance with lead paint regulations and challenges identifying children with elevated blood lead levels. Additionally, HUD lacks detailed procedures for addressing noncompliance consistently and in a timely manner. Developing a plan and detailed procedures to address noncompliance with lead paint regulations could strengthen HUD's oversight of public housing agencies.
- **Inspections.** The lead inspection standard for the Housing Choice Voucher program is less strict than that of the public housing program. By requesting and obtaining statutory authority to amend the standard for the voucher program, HUD would be positioned to take steps to better protect children in voucher units from lead exposure as indicated by analysis of benefits and costs.
- **Performance assessment and reporting.** HUD lacks comprehensive goals and performance measures for its lead reduction efforts. In addition, it has not complied with annual statutory reporting requirements, last reporting as required on its lead efforts in 1997. Without better performance assessment and reporting, HUD cannot fully assess the effectiveness of its lead efforts.

Examples of Homes with Lead Paint Hazards



Source: GAO. | GAO-18-394