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Macomb juvenile justice center to layoff 25 workers

Detroit Free Press – October 7, 2015, By Christina Hall

Macomb County is planning about 25 layoffs at its juvenile justice center as the number of youth in the detention and residential treatment center has declined -- a trend that officials there said is occurring across the region and state as youth are placed in less-restrictive services.

The announcement today came a day after a bi-partisan group of legislators from metro Detroit introduced a package of bills in Lansing that would raise the age when a juvenile is considered an adult in the criminal justice system from 17 to 18 years old.

Michigan is one of nine states that automatically prosecutes 17-year-olds as adults, according to a release from Michigan United. The bills would allow youth to be transferred to the adult system on a case-by-case basis, state Rep. Peter Lucido, R-Shelby Township, said in a news release from the Michigan Council on Crime and Delinquency.

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Macomb exec lashes out at attorney in jail death suit

Part of the legislative package would create a financial incentive for counties to use community-based programs over expensive residential facilities.

Macomb County Deputy Executive Mark Deldin said the county's 140-bed juvenile justice center — renovated a decade ago for \$29 million -- has fewer than 40 youth. It is staffed for 120 youth, he said, including those from neighboring St. Clair County, which closed its underused juvenile detention facility two years ago.

Now, about 25 case managers and youth specialists will be laid off in the next four to six weeks because of declining occupancy, Deldin said, calling the layoffs an "uncomfortable and unpleasant task" but one that is a "fiduciary responsibility."

The positions remain in next year's budget and workers could be called back if there is an influx in youth. But that may not occur, in part, because juvenile court filings also are down, said Nicole Faulds, juvenile court director.

Juvenile Justice Center Director Rhonda Westphal said there is an effort to reinvent the center through more training for staff, hiring a treatment manager and having more evidence-based curriculum and programs that better cater to the needs of the youth, perhaps drawing more youth to the center instead of programs elsewhere.

She said the reduction in youth started about five years ago.

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Jail death lawsuit. He was naked, hurting, no one aided

"Some variables that directly impact, vary from community, is a growing trend in juvenile justice using the least restrictive services for kids," Westphal said.

Faulds said detention and residential treatment are a "last resort for a public safety issue," adding that once youth are in detention they often don't finish high school and end up in the adult criminal justice system.

Westphal said of the state's 19 county court-operated facilities, they have 50% or less youth in the detention or treatment facility, a trend that she said is a national one.

On Monday, the 190-bed Wayne County Juvenile Detention Facility had 97 youths, said Lloyd Jackson, communications and community outreach director for the county's Department of Health, Veterans and Community Wellness. He said 21 temporary non-union positions were eliminated and 10-full time union employees were laid off at the center during Wayne County Executive Warren Evans' restructuring process.

Jackson said the decline in the number of youth at the center is attributed to diversion and youth assistance programs and in-home care facilities.

Westphal told Macomb County commissioners that Oakland County Children's Village, which offers detention, residential treatment and shelter care services, had less than 47% capacity a couple of months ago.

According to the Michigan Council on Crime and Delinquency, there has been a movement in the last decade or so in the juvenile justice field to treat youth closer to home and in less-restrictive environments. The community-based programs cost less, reduce re-offending and incidents of violent youth crime, and improve youth and family well-being, experts say.

In addition, the number of arrests of juveniles ages 10-16 have been dropping steadily in Michigan from 2008 to 2013, when there were 13,265 arrests. That total accounted for a very small portion of the 260,000 total arrests reported in the state that year, according to Michigan's Statewide Juvenile Arrest Analysis Report released in June. It stated most of the juvenile crimes were for larcenies.

The number of 17-year-olds arrested were 8,514 in 2013, according to the report.

The statewide youth offender reform bills were introduced this week because of a growing concern of the treatment of youth in Michigan's adult prison system, according to releases announcing the proposals.

More than 20,000 youth under 18 have been sentenced as adults in Michigan during the past decade, with most convicted for nonviolent offenses and with no prior juvenile record, according to releases.

The proposed changes, which follow recommendations from a recent report by the Michigan Council on Crime and Delinquency, would permit 17-year-olds to be processed in juvenile courts; prohibit youth under 18 from being sent to adult jails, and eliminate certain offenses that automatically trigger adult prosecution, such as running away from a juvenile facility, according to the council.

The bills also would require public monitoring and oversight of youth under the jurisdiction of the Michigan Department of Corrections who entered for an offense committed prior to turning 18; ensure age-appropriate programming and outdoor exercise for youth under 21 in administration segregation in prison, and establish a family advisory board within the state Department of Corrections.

"Seventy-percent of all 17-year-olds in Michigan's criminal justice system come from only 10 counties," said Kristen Staley, associate director of the Michigan Council on Crime and Delinquency, in a news release. "Of those 10, all have strong juvenile justice services like diversion, community-based programs and mentoring that are better equipped to provide the age-appropriate rehabilitation we know yields better outcomes for our youth and our communities. But, until we raise the age of juvenile court jurisdiction, these children will never have access to these great services."

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Inmates file \$10 million lawsuit about Macomb jail

Earlier this month, W.J. Maxey Boys Training School, a state juvenile justice facility just outside Whitmore Lake that housed many youth from metro Detroit, closed for budgetary reasons.

The start of state government's 2016 budget year Oct. 1 marked the controversial end of the boys training school, shuttering three state-run juvenile justice facilities and upending 65 state employee jobs.

The Michigan Department of Health & Human Services has scrambled over the past several months to find new placement for juveniles and employees after the Legislature — over the objection of state employee unions and mental health groups — finally made good on years of trying to close the 60-bed facility for offenders ages 12 to 21.

All of the 48 youth have been successfully placed, Department of Health & Human Services spokesman Bob Wheaton said in an e-mail to the Lansing State Journal.

<http://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/macomb/2015/10/07/juvenile-justice-layoff-macomb-legislation/73532682/>

Official calls closing of Whitmore Lake facility 'a shame'

9 & 10 News – October 8, 2015

WHITMORE LAKE, Mich. (AP) - The supervisor of a township in Livingston County says it's "a shame" that the state closed a juvenile justice facility in a nearby community west of Detroit.

Three state-run juvenile justice facilities, including W.J. Maxey Boys Training School in Whitmore Lake, were shuttered with the beginning of the new state budget year on Oct. 1. The Livingston Daily Press & Argus (<http://bit.ly/1LmMk6I>) reports that the Department of Health and Human Services has been working over the past several months to find new placement for juveniles and 65 state employees who were affected by the decision.

Green Oak Township Supervisor Mark St. Charles says it's too bad the Maxey kids were "uprooted" but they've been reassigned to different facilities.

Maxey was a 60-bed facility that housed offenders ages 12 to 21.

Information from: Livingston Daily Press & Argus, <http://www.livingstondaily.com>

<http://www.9and10news.com/story/30212827/official-calls-closing-of-whitmore-lake-facility-a-shame>

Snyder announces \$12-million plan to fix Flint water

Detroit Free Press – October 8, 2015, by John Wisely

Gov. Rick Snyder said today that he has a plan to come up with the \$12 million needed to reconnect Flint to the Detroit water system to address elevated lead levels.

Snyder said he will ask the Legislature for \$6 million. The C.S. Mott Foundation, a Flint-based nonprofit founded by auto pioneer Charles Stewart Mott, has pledged another \$4 million, and the City of Flint will provide the additional \$2 million from its water and sewer fund.

"I'm in full support of the return to the Great Lakes Water Authority," Snyder said, referring to the new authority that was formed to manage Detroit's water system outside the city limits. "We all care about the citizens of Flint."

The announcement came following a report last week showing that the number of Flint children with elevated blood-lead levels — 5 micrograms per deciliter or more — jumped from 2.1% in the 20 months prior to Sept. 15, 2013, to 4.0% between Jan. 1 and Sept. 15 this year. In certain ZIP codes, the change was more drastic, jumping from 2.5% of the children tested to 6.3%.

The analysis was by Hurley Medical Center pediatrician Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha.

State officials said today that three schools also tested positive for elevated lead levels, including Freeman Elementary School, where a sample showed a lead level of 101 parts per billion, almost seven times the level that requires remediation.

Flint has been battling problems with its municipal drinking water system for more than a year after disconnecting from the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department. The city has joined Genesee County in building a new pipeline from Lake Huron as part of the Karegnondi Water Authority, but that project isn't expected to come online until next year.

Meantime, it has been drawing water from the Flint River and treating it at its own plant.

Snyder said the state would review what went wrong with the switch to help prevent future problems from occurring in other places. He defended the city's decision to switch to the river water last year — a move that included a sign-off from state-appointed emergency manager Darnell Earley, now emergency manager for Detroit Public Schools.

The river water was tested when it left the city's treatment plant and was fine, Snyder said. The problem developed in the distribution system.

Experts believe the chemical composition of the water caused corrosion in pipes and plumbing fixtures that contained lead, letting contaminated water come out of faucets in homes and businesses across Flint.

City Councilman Eric Mays said residents are still angry that this has happened to the city.

"I think it's a day late and a dollar short, but I'm glad we're doing it," Mays said.

He said the city has \$8 million available in its water and sewer fund to pay for its share of the deal. City Council must approve the expenditure.

At the news conference this morning, Snyder also said he is seeking an additional \$4 million to help with the current situation, including additional testing at Flint schools.

Dan Wyant, director of the Michigan Department of Environment Quality, said 37 water samples for Flint schools were tested for lead and four of the samples came back with levels above 15 parts per billion, the level at which officials are supposed to perform additional testing and remediation.

Two of the samples came from Eisenhower Elementary School, another came from Brownell Stem Academy, and last and most alarming was Freeman Elementary School.

"The data clearly demonstrates that more detail sampling needs to occur so that various sources of lead contamination contained in each school's plumbing can be identified," Wyant said.

The schools are distributing bottled water to students to avoid drinking potentially contaminated water from fountains.

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Waiting for answers, action in Flint water crisis

Snyder brought Wyant with him to the news conference as well as Dr. Eden Wells, chief medical executive at the Department of Health and Human Services. Ridgway White of the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation also attended along with Flint Mayor Dayne Walling.

"I could hardly sleep knowing that our youngest and most vulnerable children were at risk," Walling said.

He said public confidence is an important part of public safety. He said the switch back to Detroit would be the fastest way to provide safe water.

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Avoiding tap water has become a way of life in Flint

Flint had been using the river as a backup source whenever there were disturbances in service from Detroit, but problems arose when it began using river water as its primary source. Last year, the city found E. coli in the water and later rust and other materials that discolored it.

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Doctor: Lead seen in more Flint kids since water switch

On Wednesday, a technical advisory committee made up of experts in engineering, chemistry, public health and other fields recommended to the city that it reconnect to the Detroit water system until its own Lake Huron supply comes online.

"The Great Lakes Water Authority is committed to providing that service to Flint while the city implements a new drinking water system," interim director Sue McCormick, said in a statement. "DWSD is dedicated to ensuring that Michigan residents who depend on our water and infrastructure have access to the best drinking water available."

<http://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/2015/10/08/snyder-flint-water-reconnect/73567778/>

Flint returning to Detroit water, but problems persist

Michigan Radio – October 8, 2015, By Steve Carmody

Flint is going back to Detroit water.

The state, the city and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation together are kicking in \$12 million to shut off the tap to the Flint River.

A year and a half ago, city leaders stood in Flint's water plant and raised plastic glasses to toast the city's switch to the Flint River.

Eighteen months later, Governor Snyder has announced the end of the Flint River experiment.

“I’m in full support of a return to the Great Lakes Water Authority (formerly the DWSD),” Snyder told a mid-morning news conference in Flint, “and that we do this in a prompt and efficient fashion.”

It may only take a few weeks to bring to an end what has become a failed experiment.

Since shutting off the pipeline from Detroit and tapping the Flint River for the city’s drinking water, Flint residents have endured a progressively nightmarish existence every time they filled a glass from their kitchen faucet.

The cloudy water smelled and tasted bad. Then there were E. coli outbreaks. The heavy chlorination in response to those outbreaks left people with burned skin and hair falling out in clumps.

A disinfectant by-product landed the city in violation of the Safe Drinking Water Act for a year.

And then there’s lead.

A Virginia Tech research team found ‘serious’ levels of lead in the tap water in a significant percentage of Flint homes. Other tests showed blood lead levels in Flint children have doubled since the switch.

New tests of drinking water in 13 Flint schools show 4 schools with seriously high lead levels. At one school, Freeman Elementary on the city’s south side, the water tested at more than 100 parts per billion. That’s more than six times the federal action level for lead.

“We are suggesting we have specialized staff go in and really track who has elevated blood levels,” says Nick Lyon, the director of the Department of Health and Human Services, “You don’t know the facts until you know the facts. So we’re going to test these children.”

Pastor Allen Overton has been a leader in the grassroots movement to return Flint to Detroit water. He listened as the governor and other officials talked about the steps being taken to quickly get Detroit water flowing to Flint again.

Overton blames Flint’s mayor and other city leaders for not asking the governor for help sooner.

“If they had (brought) it to the governor before now I think he would have moved before now,” says Overton, “But they were slow about getting it to the governor. So that’s why I think it took so long to get to this point.”

The head of Flint’s public works department says it will take about two weeks to re-connect with Detroit’s system.

But that doesn’t end Flint’s water woes.

The highly corrosive Flint River water has caused, by some estimates, tens of millions of dollars in damage to older lead and iron pipes in Flint. Lead will continue to leach into the water even after the switch to a less corrosive water source. Then there are the long-term health effects on children who have been drinking water with high levels of lead for more than a year.

Flint Mayor Dayne Walling says the city will need help repairing and replacing the city’s aging and decaying water infrastructure.

He suggests other cities should pay attention to what’s been happening in Flint.

“There are important lessons from Flint’s experience,” says Walling, “We need to take a look at federal and state policy reforms, that include expanding water safety sampling to include our most vulnerable families.”

"We need to look at factors of affordability in public health and infrastructure all being assessed together," Flint's mayor adds.

The governor says he's asking the Michigan legislature for half the expected 12 million dollar cost of getting Flint hooked back up to Detroit water. That's until next year, when a new pipeline from Lake Huron is expected to be ready. The Mott Foundation is kicking in four million dollars and the city will come up with two million dollars.

This experiment that was supposed to save millions of dollars will most certainly will end up costing the city and the state dearly.

<http://michiganradio.org/post/flint-returning-detroit-water-problems-persist#stream/0>

Michigan providing water filters in Flint after high lead readings

Fox News – October 7, 2015

DETROIT – Michigan on Tuesday began distributing free water filters to residents of Flint, a week after confirming that some children had elevated levels of lead in their blood since the city began taking water from a nearby river.

The state last week confirmed a recent study at Hurley Children's Hospital that found increased lead levels in blood tests for children living in two Flint ZIP codes.

The city of about 100,000 residents started using the Flint River as its water source in 2014 after a state-appointed emergency manager ruled out a deal to keep buying water from Detroit, 66 miles (106 km) to the southeast.

The filters are being distributed to public assistance recipients and Flint residents through a partnership between the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services and the Genesee County Community Action Resource Department.

About 5,500 filters had already been given out through private donations.

Michigan Governor Rick Snyder on Friday announced a plan to address the city's drinking water. The state insists the water is safe to drink, but some families could experience higher lead levels if their homes have lead plumbing or service connections.

The plan calls for increased water testing, additional precautions for families with lead plumbing and long-term solutions to address the city's water infrastructure challenges. It does not include restoring Detroit as the water source.

<http://www.foxnews.com/health/2015/10/07/michigan-providing-water-filters-in-flint-after-high-lead-readings/>

Flint's water woes finally see state action

Modern Healthcare – October 8, 2015, By Andis Robeznieks

After allowing months of foot-dragging from state and local officials, Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder last week finally initiated steps to reduce heightened lead levels in the city of Flint's water supply.

The remediation program comes months after scientists hired by local residents conducted water tests and reported their findings to the local water agency and state environmental protection officials, who at first refused to act.

Now, some of the scientists who ran those tests say the officials in charge of Flint's water quality can't be trusted. "The same people who caused this are running the show," said Marc Edwards, a professor of environmental and water

resources engineering at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, who sampled water for Flint's residents last April.

Edwards' tests found "hazardous-waste-level" amounts of lead—13,200 parts per billion—in one home's tap water, among hundreds of homes he tested. "There is a very serious problem with Flint's water—it's not debatable," he said.

The exact causes of the problem are still being debated. In April 2014, the impoverished city switched its water supply from Detroit-furnished Lake Huron water to the Flint River to cut costs.

Some local residents subsequently began reporting skin rashes and other health problems. When local officials didn't respond to their complaints, they hired outside scientists to test the water in selected homes and take blood samples from local children. Both studies showed lead levels well above Environmental Protection Agency limits.

Elevated blood-lead levels, especially in young children, can cause long- and short-term health problems, ranging from headaches and stomach pains to behavioral issues and anemia. Lead exposure also affects developing brains, and has been shown to reduce total IQ in those who are chronically exposed.

After receiving the water test results, local and state officials continued to downplay the issue. State officials said the lead wasn't coming from the water itself, but was being dislodged from antiquated city and home plumbing infrastructures by the corrosive nature of the water.

After switching the city's water supply to the Flint River, however, anti-corrosive measures, which are needed to keep lead from leaching out of pipes and into the water, were never taken.

But that's started to change after the state's Department of Environmental Quality confirmed results of a study by Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha, an assistant professor at Michigan State University's College of Human Medicine in Lansing, that showed children in some sections of the city had elevated blood-lead levels. Lead levels above 5 micrograms per deciliter of blood are now considered dangerous, although the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says any lead in the blood—especially in young children—can cause harm.

On Oct. 1, the Genesee County Board of Commissioners issued an emergency advisory instructing residents not to drink water from the Flint River until their home's water has been tested and found free of elevated lead levels. The county also said water filters should be installed in local homes.

That's when Gov. Snyder finally acted. His plan calls for testing water in schools and homes, providing free water filters and accelerating corrosion controls and the replacement of the lead service lines that connect Flint homes, schools and businesses to the city's water mains.

He also stepped up the pace on pipeline construction that will bring Lake Huron water back to Flint, setting a completion date for June of 2016. The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services also allocated \$1 million for mitigation efforts that include purchasing 1,800 water filters to be distributed by the Flint Housing Commission.

"We are focused on helping ensure safe, clean, accessible drinking water and addressing and mitigating concerns and protecting public health," Snyder said in a news release last week. "Today's action plan builds upon ongoing work with local, state and federal agencies, and our partnership with city and community leaders."

The water woes in Flint, a deindustrialized city whose poverty and economic problems received national attention in 1989 when filmmaker and hometown hero Michael Moore released the feature "Roger & Me," is also drawing charitable contributions from across the country. For instance, Zero Technologies in Bensalem, Pa., manufacturer of ZeroWater filters, donated 5,000 filter tumblers to Flint's schools.

The scientists hired by local residents aren't the only ones expressing frustration about the state's slow-moving

remediation efforts. Environmental activists from around the country, led by the Natural Resources Defense Council, have petitioned the EPA (PDF) to take over the operation.

But an EPA spokesman said the federal agency is already involved. "Actions that the State of Michigan and the City of Flint announced last week are important steps to protect public health," the spokesman said. "The immediate steps being taken to implement corrosion control will reduce lead in drinking water, as required by the Safe Drinking Water Act. U.S. EPA will continue to provide technical assistance to the State of Michigan and the City of Flint to support their joint effort."

<http://www.modernhealthcare.com/article/20151008/NEWS/151009959/mistrust-greets-state-efforts-to-mitigate-flints-water-woes>

Toxic lead levels found in water at three Flint schools

MLive – October 8, 2015, by Dominic Adams

FLINT, MI – Three buildings within the Flint School District have tested above the federal limits for lead in the drinking water.

Michigan Department of Environmental Quality Director Dan Wyant said Thursday, Oct. 8, during a news conference in Flint that water at Eisenhower and Freeman elementary schools, along with Brownell/Holmes STEM academies tested above 15 parts per billion for lead -- the safety standard set by the federal government.

One of the schools tested at more than six times the federal limit.

The state is calling for children at the affected schools to get their blood tested to see if they have elevated blood lead levels, officials said.

Gov. Snyder was in Flint announcing a plan to ask the state Legislature for \$6 million to allow Flint to reconnect to Detroit Water and Sewerage until the Karegnondi Water Pipeline is complete in the summer of 2016. The state funds would be matched by a \$4 million grant from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

He said there were four of 37 samples from 13 schools that exceeded the 15 ppb standard.

Eisenhower had two samples of 16 ppb and 28 ppb, while Freeman had a sample that showed 101 parts per billion, Wyant said.

"The data clearly demonstrates that more detailed sampling needs to occur so that various sources of lead contamination contained within each perspective school's plumbing can be identified and addressed," he said. "The data underscores the need for a complete and thorough evaluation of the plumbing in the schools to determine a corrective action plan."

The MDEQ will continue to assist the Flint School District with evaluations, sampling and corrective measures, Wyant said.

"Schools should continue use of bottled water," he said.

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services will provide eight staff toxicologists in Flint to help with data analysis, according to Director Nick Lyon.

There also will be free testing for any other Flint school, including daycares and head starts, state officials said.

The Flint Journal could not reach Flint School District Superintendent Bilal Tawwab for comment.

http://www.mlive.com/news/flint/index.ssf/2015/10/three_flint_schools_water_exce.html

How risky is drinking water contaminated with lead?

CBS News – October 8, 2015, By Mary Brophy Marcus

The public health emergency declared in Flint, Michigan, over high levels of lead in the drinking water raises concerns about the long-lasting impact lead exposure could have on the city's residents, especially children.

After the city switched its municipal water supply from Detroit to the more local Flint River in 2014 to save money, some 100,000 residents may have been exposed. Chemicals used to treat the water leached lead from old pipes leading to homes, contaminating the water people got from their taps.

Reports of smelly, discolored water began to flow in last fall and researchers have since found elevated lead levels in dozens of children.

Just how much lead people have been exposed to isn't clear yet, said Dr. Eden Wells, Chief Medical Executive for the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services.

"My understanding as of yesterday is that they don't have all of that mapped out yet -- that's part of the investigation. We on the health side have a lead testing program and since the 2014 Flint River water switch, we have seen about 100 children with lead levels greater than 5 micrograms per deciliter [in their blood]," said Wells.

Wells, who is also a clinical associate professor in epidemiology at the University of Michigan School of Public Health, said a level of zero is the ideal.

"Lead at any level can be associated with decreases in IQ, behavioral disorders, even an association with certain juvenile delinquency as these children get older," she said.

When Flint, Michigan, disconnected their water supply from Detroit and started drawing from the Flint River, they were thinking of \$15 million in...

Children are most vulnerable to lead exposure, especially those aged one to five, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Anyone with 5 micrograms per deciliter or above has a blood lead level higher than most children's, CDC says.

At higher levels, a child or adult may become anemic, experience stomach troubles, and may have difficulty with walking and coordination. Brain damage, seizures, and coma can occur, too.

Experts recommend chelation therapy when a blood lead level test result is greater than or equal to 45 micrograms per deciliter, according to the CDC. The treatment involves giving a patient medication that reduces the blood's lead level in a hospital setting where they are monitored very closely, said Wells. She said counseling is provided as well.

Lead is very slowly eliminated from the body, since it can remain in some body tissues for years, said Dr. Carlos Lerner, Associate Clinical Professor of Pediatrics and Medical Director of the Children's Health Center at the Mattel Children's Hospital UCLA.

Lerner told CBS News, "It is excreted via the urine and the stools. For most exposures, the main priority is to ensure that the child is not exposed to any additional lead."

When it comes to Flint's water situation, Wells said every child with an elevated lead level greater than 5 micrograms per deciliter will have an elevated blood level investigation conducted by the state's mobile health department. They'll discuss with families possible exposures to lead at home or school.

Investigators will also look for lead in old paint, paint dust and the soil. Homes and buildings built prior to the 1970s are more likely to have lead, she said. "Water isn't usually tested but given what we're dealing with in Flint, water will also will be tested now."

Even old jewelry and certain medications can contain lead, she noted.

Concerned families can visit their pediatrician's office or go to their local health department for free blood level testing. Medicaid pays for lead tests.

The blood test is simple, said Lerner. "Typically, blood is drawn from the vein and sent to the laboratory. In some instances, the initial test is done by a finger prick and the test is run in the doctor's office."

It's especially important to test for lead in the youngest of children -- ages one and two -- as well as in pregnant women, say the experts.

"Lead exposure during pregnancy and for young children can have long-term negative effects on behavior and development. Very high levels of lead exposure can affect multiple organs, including the brain, blood, kidneys and the gastrointestinal system," said Lerner.

Wells added, "We really worry about pregnant women and infants. We know that long-standing lead exposure can lead to some long-term effects."

<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/how-risky-is-drinking-water-contaminated-with-lead/>

When did state know about lead in Flint water? 6 takeaways from Snyder plan MLive – October 9, 2015, By Ron Fonger

FLINT, MI -- Gov. Rick Snyder has announced a \$16 million plan to reduce lead in the city's drinking water, and he and other key players in carrying it out made several key points to remember on Thursday, Oct. 8.

Among them:

1. When did the state know of Flint's lead problem?: The first indication of rising lead levels in Flint drinking water came from the city's own sampling of water inside homes in the city soon after it changed its water source from Lake Huron to the Flint River.

Results from 100 water samples collected from Flint in 2014 showed increasing lead levels with 10 percent of homes tested at 6 parts per billion of lead or more.

Those were the highest lead levels measured in Flint by the city in more than 20 years, the state data shows.

That testing was completed more than nine months ago, but because the levels did not meet the federal action limit of 15 ppb, 69 more tests were done in 2015, and lead levels continued to rise.

Michigan Department of Environmental Quality Director Dan Wyant said the state notified the city of the need to develop a lead action plan in August 2015, but the concerns about lead levels were never publicized as a potential public health threat until researchers from Virginia Tech university pushed the issue.

2. Water in schools: In the past seven days, the state tested Flint School District buildings for lead in water, finding three buildings that tested above the federal limits.

Snyder said he is planning to spend \$4 million on non-Detroit-water expenses in Flint, and the school district will get immediate attention, including a complete evaluation of the plumbing systems in all 13 city schools.

Testing for lead in water in schools could also be a broader issue moving forward, as the governor said there "probably should be" school water testing elsewhere in Michigan.

3. A change in tone: State officials, including the governor, on Thursday praised the work of a Hurley Medical Center doctor who published a study on the blood lead levels of Flint children since the city changed its water source.

"The Flint Hurley data and the confirmation (from the state Department of Health & Human Services)...just reinforces the significance of this issue," the governor said.

A spokeswoman for the state DHSS just two weeks ago dismissed the Hurley study, saying the state's more extensive data "is not in line" with the findings.

Likewise, there was no questioning Thursday of water testing by Virginia Tech, which first brought lead concerns to light.

Just one month ago, a spokesman for the state DEQ said of the testing that while the state "appreciates academic participation in this discussion, offering broad, dire public health advice based on some quick testing could be seen as fanning political flames irresponsibly."

4. Lesson learned: The governor said the state wasn't immediately on alert because of Flint's water quality because water coming out of the city's treatment plant met all state and federal guidelines for lead.

When the water interacted with lead service lines and lead solder in pipes, however, it caused significantly more leaching of lead into water than Lake Huron water did.

"That's something that you learn through this process," Snyder said.

5. No so fast: While Snyder said the immediate concern is addressing the public health emergency here rather than assigning blame, he said decisions that were made will be reviewed and changes could be recommended.

Others said more answers are still necessary or different approaches required.

"I'm heartened that the residents of Flint will soon have cleaner, safer water flowing from their taps, but I'm determined to get answers to make sure this doesn't happen in my community or other communities ever again," said state Senate Minority Leader Jim Ananich, D-Flint. "I want to be clear — this is not a victory for my community. This is a fix to a problem that never should have happened."

U.S. Rep Dan Kildee, D-Flint, said, in part, "Flint is a financially distressed city, and it should not have to empty out its bank account to pay for the state's failures.

"The decision to switch to the Flint River water source was made while the city was under state emergency management, and now it is incumbent on Gov. Snyder and the state to fix – and pay – for the problem they created."

6. What's next: Flint Mayor Dayne Walling said the City Council and Receivership Transition Advisory Board will be asked to take action to fund \$2 million to help pay for Detroit water for the next nine months.

That could start as soon as Monday, Oct. 12, when the council is scheduled to meet in a committee at 4:30 p.m. and a regular meeting at 6 p.m.

The flow of Detroit water is expected to begin within the next two weeks.

http://www.mlive.com/news/flint/index.ssf/2015/10/seven_key_takeaways_from_gov_s.html

State nurses say they work too much OT

Lansing State Journal – October 8, 2015, By Justin A. Hinkley

LANSING — The well-being of some 700 patients in state psychiatric hospitals is in the hands of nurses who say they're overworked, overtired and overstressed because of excessively mandated double shifts.

Sometimes several days a week, nurses in Michigan's five state-run hospitals end their regular eight-hour shifts only to be ordered to cover staffing shortages by working another eight hours, against the recommendations of nursing groups and one of the state's own task forces. Several current and former nurses at the Michigan Department of Health & Human Services told the State Journal they're worked to the point of exhaustion and ragged nerves, more prone to errors or poor judgment as they deal with unpredictable, sometimes violent patients.

Employees who refuse overtime mandates can be disciplined and "patient abandonment" could get them stripped of their licenses.

State hospitals are "mandating their staff to death, truly to death," said Eliza Marroni, a 41-year-old Plymouth nurse who said she left her job at the state's Hawthorn Center in August because of the stress.

State auditors have blamed at least one patient death on poor oversight by nurses and resident care aides at DHHS hospitals, though audits don't mention overtime or fatigue. Nationwide, some estimates peg medical errors as the third-leading cause of death, and advocacy group the American Nurses Association says mistakes and fatigue go hand-in-hand.

But DHHS officials said overtime is not as prevalent as nurses claim. They also said aides — who are less likely to be mandated because there are more of them — have the most direct contact with patients.

"We appreciate and understand the demands of the mandatory overtime on staff, and we're doing everything we can to reduce it," said Joe Collins, DHHS human resources director. "But we don't see it as impinging on patient care."

Data provided by the department — a snapshot of overtime for registered nurse managers from mid-June to mid-September — shows nurses were occasionally mandated to take an extra shift three or more days in a row — at the Kalamazoo Psychiatric Hospital, for example, some employees logged 32 hours of required overtime on some biweekly paychecks. But the logs show the most overworked nurses averaged only about three hours of mandatory overtime per week this summer.

[Click here to view a larger version of this chart.](#)

Yet nurses said that, with the care of others in their hands, even that can be problematic.

"We're taking care of patients and you want to be your most alert and using your problem-solving skills," said Cassandra Craig, a 52-year-old nurse at the Kalamazoo hospital. "For anybody that's working an additional shift ... you're not going to be as alert, even if it's just one time."

Hospitals mandate extra shifts when no one volunteers and there aren't enough nurses — because of turnover, employees calling in sick or off with injuries, special patient demands, or other issues — to meet patient needs. The logs show nurses volunteered for overtime almost twice as much they were mandated.

DHHS officials said they struggle to recruit and keep nurses. But nurses said the problem is cyclical: Nurses call in, quit and are injured because they're exhausted by mandatory overtime, but their absence causes more mandates.

The only solution, according to the Michigan Nurses Association, a union unaffiliated with the ANA, is for Michigan to join a dozen other states in limiting mandatory overtime through statute. They're backing a bill state Sen. Rebekah Warren plans to introduce this month.

"It is a universal problem," said Dawn Kettinger, the union's director of advocacy and outreach. "Nurses are being burned out in all sectors."

'My family didn't want to be around me'

Fred Spes, a 49-year-old registered nurse manager at the state's Caro Center, celebrated his 20th anniversary at the Thumb Region hospital last month. He said mandatory overtime is the worst he's seen it.

Every day, the Unionville man is up by 4 a.m. to get out the door in time for his half-hour drive to a 6 a.m. shift. If he's mandated — as happened to him a handful of times over the last three months — he may not leave work until 10:30 p.m. and won't get home until 11. He's lucky to fall asleep by midnight and then it's back up at 4 to start all over again.

On those days, "you're tired. You're dealing with the mentally ill, who can be aggressive at any moment," he said. "You're just not functioning as well."

The ANA says hospitals should not use mandatory overtime — 12 hours a day, 40 hours a week is the ceiling, ANA President Pam Cipriano said — because fatigued nurses can compromise patient care. It's a warning DHHS has heard before: In 2012, a state-commissioned task force said the department should "support a workplace culture change that eliminates extended work periods" because fatigued nurses might miss mistakes.

At state hospitals, nurses said they typically don't find out they're mandated until they come to work. They must work an entire additional shift unless they find a colleague willing to relieve them.

"It's hard to find any takers," Spes said. "I've paid a hundred bucks to someone to take my mandate."

Problems at home pile on.

Marroni, the former Hawthorn nurse, is married with a 13-year-old son. She said she's missed her son's hockey tournaments and family dinners. During a particularly bad three- or four-week stretch earlier this year, she said she was mandated at least three times a week. It took its toll.

"I gained a ton of weight. I wasn't eating well. I certainly wasn't exercising," she said. "I was crabby. My family didn't want to be around me too much."

After about three years with DHHS, she quit and took a job as a school nurse.

'Then we're stuck'

Nurses burn out — some quicker than others, said Cindy Kelly, director of DHHS's Bureau of State Hospitals. Community health has one of the highest turnover rates in state government, according to the Michigan Civil Service Commission.

Sometimes DHHS invests in finding, hiring and training nurses who then “get on the floor and decide they just don’t want to work there,” Kelly said. “Then we’re stuck.”

At one hospital, the department was recently blindsided by four simultaneous exits.

“It’s a demanding area to work in,” she said. “We’re trying to fill the positions as quickly as we can, to get the most competent people that we can.”

The ANA’s Cipriano said mandatory overtime ebbs and flows with nurse shortages, and she agreed psychiatric hospitals are “a tougher area to recruit to.”

In years past, state government’s pensions, valuable health insurance and competitive pay made it worthwhile, said John DeTizio, labor relations director for the Michigan Association of Governmental Employees. But he said the calculus has changed with public sector benefit cuts in recent years.

“These are dangerous patients,” DeTizio said. “And then (nurses) compare the pay and say, ‘Why the heck should I stay here?’”

\$8,800 per employee

DeTizio said he’ll ask the state to give nurses a special salary bump to help with recruitment and retention, which should alleviate mandatory overtime. DHHS’ registered nurses make between \$22 and \$41 an hour, according to state Civil Service Commission. In public and private facilities, the average registered nurse in Michigan makes \$32 an hour.

Kelly said she’s been unable to convince the Legislature she needs more money. Lawmakers cut \$178,000 from state hospitals for the budget year that began Oct. 1.

Meanwhile, overtime costs taxpayers.

Across all departments, Michigan spent \$105.5 million between October and July compensating state employees for both voluntary and mandatory overtime, the State Budget Office said. That works out to a rate of nearly \$2,300 per employee.

The state spent \$8,800 per nurse on mandatory and voluntary overtime.

The Department of Corrections, state government’s top overtime spender, is in the midst of a hiring spree and expects to employ 1,000 new recruits before year’s end. The State Police, the second-highest spender, will run an 88-trooper recruit school this year, but much of that department’s overtime is spent on emergencies, court appearances, and special enforcement initiatives, spokeswoman Shanon Banner said, and federal grants and dedicated funds cover about a third of the cost.

Community health, where about two-thirds of employees work at state hospitals, is the third-highest spender on overtime.

[Click here to view graph.](#)

An unacceptable tradeoff

Warren, a Democratic Senator from Ann Arbor, said the bill she plans to introduce this month — establishing staff-to-patient ratios at both public and private facilities and prohibiting mandatory overtime except for emergencies — would help.

The sister and daughter of nurses, Warren introduced similar legislation in 2013, but her bill stalled in committee. This time, Warren said she'll tweak the bill to reflect lessons learned from states with existing overtime prohibitions. And she'll come with data showing the regulations can work, despite some of her colleagues' concerns that there aren't enough nurses to meet her stipulations.

A 2010 University of Pennsylvania study found California, which limits nurse overtime, had less nurse "burnout" and more satisfied nurses than states without such limits. California also grew its nursing workforce.

"It actually makes nursing more desirable as a profession and we get folks who go into it and stay into it," she said.

Collins and Kelly said an overtime prohibition would make it more difficult to adequately staff state hospitals. The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services said last year that Michigan will actually have a surplus of registered nurses by 2025. But today, "there's still a nursing shortage," Collins said.

In Texas, which has a statutory prohibition on mandatory overtime, state hospitals incentivize voluntary overtime and have switched to 12-hour shifts at some facilities to cover needs without requiring additional shifts, Texas Department of State Health Services spokeswoman Carrie Williams said.

Warren said it would be up to DHHS to request any additional funding necessary to prevent overtime, but she called it a public health issue that should be a priority for the Legislature.

"We don't let people fly airplanes after so many hours on the job. We don't let people drive trucks when they've had too many hours on the job," she said. "And yet, in nursing, the most hands-on public safety occupation there is, we have people who are working exhausted."

A dozen states already regulate nurse overtime through statute, and lawmakers in at least another eight states have tried, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Cipriano, of the ANA, said overtime bans are successful because, at the very least, "it puts some guardrails in place" and forces staff and management to work together toward a solution.

"I would not for an instant say it's easy to solve these staffing challenges," she said. "But tiring out your staff and making it unsafe for them is not an acceptable tradeoff."

MANDATORY OVERTIME

Though nurses were sometimes ordered to work mandatory overtime three shifts in a row, the Michigan Department of Health & Human Services says the overall burden on each nurse was relatively low, as this Lansing State Journal analysis of department data shows. And nurses were more likely to work voluntary overtime than mandatory. The figures below show the total per-employee average overtime worked throughout the data range, and the average weekly per-employee overtime during that time. Figures for all hospitals are for June 21 to Sept. 12, except for the Caro Center, which provided data through Sept. 30.

Note: A per-employee breakdown at the state's Center for Forensic Psychiatry wasn't available, but the department said nurses worked only 52.1 total mandatory overtime hours from June 1 through Sept. 18.

Hospital	Mandatory		Voluntary	
	Total	Per week	Total	Per week
Caro Center	46.6	3.1	62.9	4.2
Hawthorn Center	2.8	0.2	18.3	1.5

Walter Reuther Psychiatric Hospital	3.1	0.3	75.3	6.3
Kalamazoo Psychiatric Hospital	35.2	2.9	24.2	2

Source: *LSJ analysis of DHHS*

OVERTIME PER EMPLOYEE

Between Oct. 11, 2014 and July 18, 2015, Michigan state government spent \$105.5 million compensating its employees for overtime. Based on each department's average employee count as of July 18, that works out to nearly \$2,300 per employee. That is a rate, and not an actual measurement of how much overtime pay each worker received. Here's a department-by-department breakdown:

Department	Overtime per employee
Corrections	\$4,728.86
State Police	\$4,295.02
Health & Human Services — community health	\$4,223.17
Transportation	\$2,545.29
Military & Veterans Affairs	\$1,936.22
Natural Resources	\$1,201.61
Technology, Management & Budget	\$1,111.08
Health & Human Services — human services	\$537.33
Licensing & Regulatory Affairs	\$534.32
Treasury	\$502.36
State	\$351.02
Environmental Quality	\$129.11
Civil Service Commission	\$82.48
Auditor General	\$71.57
Insurance & Financial Services	\$61.78
Talent & Economic Development	\$49.82
Education	\$49.13
Attorney General	\$28.00
Agriculture & Rural Development	\$17.12
Civil Rights	\$0.05
All departments	\$2,269.48

Sources: *State Budget Office, Michigan Civil Service Commission*

<http://www.lansingstatejournal.com/story/news/local/watchdog/2015/10/08/state-nurses-say-work-much-ot/73518502/>

Land of Former Paper Mill Could become Public Health Campus

WMUK – October 8, 2015, By Gordon Evans

KALAMAZOO, MI — Three public entities are eyeing the former Performance Paper Inc. land in Kalamazoo as the site of a future public health campus. Kalamazoo County, the Family Health Center and the Michigan Department of Human Services are looking to build on the site, said Jerome Kisscorni, city of Kalamazoo economic development director and assistant city manager." (Kalamazoo Gazette)

<http://wmuk.org/webclip/land-former-paper-mill-could-become-public-health-campus>

Feds indict 7 in metro Detroit heroin bust

Detroit Free Press – October 8, 2015, By Tresa Baldas

A major heroin bust has led to the indictments of seven men who used names like "Curly," "Lil Bro" and "Little Head" to peddle drugs along Detroit's Woodward Corridor and neighboring suburbs, authorities announced today.

They said the drug peddlers often hide the white powder in a secret spot near the zipper of their pants, while selling it in Ziploc baggies,

This heroin ring especially wreaked havoc on Oakland County communities, such as Ferndale and Royal Oak, where, authorities say, the accused Detroit drug dealers made a lot of their money.

"Oakland County has witnessed heroin-related deaths double in recent years. The effect that this illegal drug has had on our communities and families has been devastating," said Oakland County Sheriff Michael Bouchard, who praised the FBI-led task force that made the bust.

So did Ferndale Police Chief Timothy Collins, stating: "Ferndale has experienced a large increase in heroin overdoses over the past year, and it has been impacted by the appearance of fentanyl."

Fentanyl is a prescription drug and a synthetic opiate more powerful than morphine, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse. It is often mixed with heroin to increase its potency.

In Oakland County, heroin-related deaths have skyrocketed in recent years, from 18 in 2012 to 61 in 2014. So far this year, the county has seen 19 heroin deaths. Across Michigan, the number of heroin-related overdose deaths has risen dramatically — from 37 in 1999 to 369 in 2013, according to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services.

<http://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/detroit/2015/10/08/feds-indict-7-metro-detroit-heroin-bust/73588774/>

Meningitis cases 'happens every year'

WNEM – October 8, 2015, By Lauren Chapman, James Felton

LANSING, MI (WNEM) - An increase in meningitis cases. It's just as common as the fall colors said Jennifer Eisner.

"This is something that happens every year," Eisner said.

She's with the state Department of Health and Human Services.

Genesee County has been hit with cases in Swartz Creek, Montrose, Beecher, and Grand Blanc recently.

Eisner said that Genesee County has had 42 cases in the past year, three in the last week alone.

"Meningitis is a complication of another infection. So it's that first infection that we want to stop," Eisner said. "And you can do that by taking steps such as washing your hands, keeping surfaces clean, covering your mouth when you cough or sneeze."

Despite the number of cases of meningitis we've been reporting on the last few weeks, Eisner stops short of calling this an outbreak.

"The numbers that we're seeing in Genesee County are not unexpected for this time of year. And we see an increase across the state every year as well during this season," Eisner said.

Eisner insists she isn't worried about the possibility of an outbreak in Mid-Michigan.

As of now, her data just doesn't support it. But she wants us all to take the necessary steps to reduce or eliminate meningitis cases all together.

"We're always concerned about the health of our residents. But this isn't something that is unusual or that we would expect to spread beyond normal numbers at this point and time," Eisner said.

>>[Check out our FAQ on meningitis](#)<<

<http://www.wnem.com/story/30220434/meningitis-cases-happens-every-year>
