

# Childhood Lead Poisoning in California

“There is no known level of lead exposure that is considered safe.”<sup>1</sup> From 2010-2014, the last 5 years for which data is available, nearly 75,000 children in California tested positive for lead poisoning.<sup>2</sup> The total number of lead-poisoned children in California is unknown, because only a small percentage of children are tested for lead poisoning. Even very low blood lead concentrations “may be associated with decreased intelligence in children, behavioral difficulties, and learning problems.”<sup>3</sup>

During the same time period, nearly 39,000 children tested positive for lead poisoning in the ten local jurisdictions that will benefit from the decision in *People v. ConAgra Grocery Products Company*. Below is a breakdown by jurisdiction and year:

## Lead-Poisoned Children under Age 21 by Local Health Jurisdiction and Year<sup>4</sup>

| Local Health Jurisdiction | 2010  | 2011  | 2012  | 2013  | 2014  | Total (2010-2014) |
|---------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------------------|
| Alameda County            | 440   | 463   | 472   | 423   | 437   | 2,235             |
| Los Angeles County        | 7,380 | 6,115 | 3,862 | 2,931 | 3,223 | 23,511            |
| Monterey County           | 452   | 416   | 277   | 254   | 230   | 1,629             |
| San Diego County          | 1,705 | 1,426 | 1,009 | 779   | 667   | 5,586             |
| San Francisco             | 1,046 | 196   | 214   | 207   | 138   | 1,801             |
| San Mateo County          | 173   | 137   | 119   | 121   | 174   | 724               |
| Santa Clara County        | 410   | 422   | 364   | 245   | 296   | 1,737             |
| Solano County             | 103   | 110   | 106   | 125   | 121   | 565               |
| Ventura County            | 469   | 328   | 186   | 125   | 97    | 1,205             |
| <b>Total</b>              |       |       |       |       |       | <b>38,993</b>     |

<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization fact sheet, “Lead poisoning and health” (Aug. 2017), available at: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs379/en/>.

<sup>2</sup> California Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Bureau, Blood Lead Data, available at: <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDPHP/DEODC/CLPPB/Pages/data.aspx>. Although there is no level of lead exposure known to be safe, the California Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Bureau reports lead poisoning statistics in the following categories: children with a blood lead level below 4.5 µg/dL, from 4.5 µg/dL to less than 9.5 µg/dL, and 9.5 µg/dL or higher.

<sup>3</sup> World Health Organization fact sheet, “Lead poisoning and health,” *supra*.

<sup>4</sup> California Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Bureau, Blood Lead Data. Data presented is for children under age 21 with a blood lead level of 4.5 µg/dL or higher.