

early detection + early intervention = healthy bodies + sharp minds

## LeadCare<sup>®</sup> II

*Improving outcomes from discovery to diagnostics*

### S u c c e s s S t o r i e s



#### **Michigan County Health Department Teams Up With WIC to Screen At-Risk Children for Lead Poisoning**

In 2004, as part of an ambitious program comprising legislation and a statewide lead-awareness campaign designed to eliminate lead poisoning in Michigan's children, the lead-poisoning-prevention program of one county health department took bold action. It moved all lead testing from its central laboratory, and placed LeadCare analyzers in its eight WIC (women, infants, and children) clinics. The reason: more than 40 percent of all babies born in the county receive WIC benefits, and each month, the WIC clinic serves more than 18,000 moms, babies, and kids under the age of five. Simply put, a WIC clinic is the ideal place to reach the at-risk population. The clear winners of this initiative are the families; the results of the WIC program prove that this approach works.

According to program leaders, they expected the positive feedback they received from parents and staff because LeadCare allows them to use finger-stick samples and gives parents real-time results. What they didn't anticipate, however, was just how effective it would be as an educational tool. They use the visit, including the three minutes that it takes to run the test, to talk to the parent about the dangers of lead exposure and what the family can do to minimize the risk. They provided the same educational information before, when they sent samples out to the central lab. But there's nothing quite as powerful as looking at the screen together and seeing the results pop up right then and there. Parents understand the importance, take action, and are more vigilant about following recommendations. Since the county implemented the point-of-care testing, the number of children with elevated blood-lead levels that are no-shows for follow-up care has dropped by 75 percent.

Statistics indicate that 50 percent of Medicaid families will move four times before a child's second birthday, so the only way to ensure that children aren't continually re-exposed in this most-critical time period is to make sure parents have the education they need to protect their children wherever they go. Testing, intervention when necessary, and education: this county's experience proves that all three are truly critical when it comes to preventing lead poisoning in children.

The benefits of point-of-care testing really hit home the summer of 2005. The county screening program identified two siblings with very high blood-lead levels. The children were sent to the hospital immediately, where follow-up testing confirmed that one of the children had a blood-lead level of 74  $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ ! In this case, on-site testing reduced the time of diagnosis and treatment from potentially weeks to hours.