



Testing for Lead in School Drinking Water

Annual Report

Calendar Year 2024

1/1/2024 to 12/31/2024

Required by:

22 M.R.S. § 2604-B

PL 2019, c. 158

Submitted by:

Maine Department of Health and Human Services

Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention

March 2025

Executive Summary

Public Law 2019, chapter 158 was enacted to increase lead testing in public and private K-12 schools' water fixtures used for drinking or culinary purposes and monitor efforts to reduce lead exposure in Maine's school children. Pursuant to 22 M.R.S. § 2604-B, Maine's Department of Health and Human Services reports annually the number of schools tested for lead, whether any specific guidance on reducing lead exposure was issued by the Department to any schools, the number of schools that engaged in abatement or mitigation, and the methods of abatement or mitigation. To comply with the legislative mandate, this status report provides updates on Maine's efforts during the report period January – December 2024 that are aimed at addressing lead identified in school drinking water, highlighting the progress of securing continued funding to support the statutory objective.

Program Status

As previously reported, the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention Drinking Water Program (Maine CDC DWP) developed a program to assist schools in meeting testing requirements under Public Law 2019, c. 158. Because this legislation did not allocate additional funding to implement the testing and barred the transfer of sampling costs to schools, external funding was needed. The DWP obtained federal grants appropriated under section 1464(d) of the Safe Drinking Water Act, amended by the Water Infrastructure Improvement Act (WIIN) Section 2107. This funding covered the cost of sample bottles, sample bottle shipment, lead (Pb) water analysis, outreach, training, and education.

Sampling began on October 1, 2021, and continued until December 31, 2022. For schools that did not meet this deadline for their initial samples, the Maine CDC DWP provided technical assistance on a case-by-case basis, until the WIIN Grant funding and the contract with A&L Laboratories ended on June 30, 2023. Through this program, the Maine CDC DWP has provided analytical tests for over 30,000 lead samples at 713 schools. This represents 99 percent of all Maine K-12 schools. More information on lead testing can be found on the Maine DWP webpage¹ and additional background details and data, is contained in the annual 2023 report previously submitted to the Legislature.

The Maine CDC DWP has recently obtained \$374,000 in renewed WIIN Grant² funding for 2024-2027. This WIIN Grant will expand the completed testing program to provide Reimbursement Grants for the purchase of filtered water bottle filling stations and drinking water fountains. This approach has been proven to be an effective method for reducing lead exposure

¹ Maine CDC DWP webpage can be found at <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/data-reports/food-water-and-environmental-health/lead-in-school-water>

² The EPA announced a total of \$26 million in funding for states and territories through the *EPA Voluntary School and Child Care Lead Testing and Reduction Grant Program* to address lead in drinking water at schools and childcare facilities. <https://www.epa.gov/dwcapacity/wiin-grant-voluntary-school-and-child-care-lead-testing-and-reduction-grant-program>

in children. DWP has contacted schools identified as priority based on Title I status and highest lead test results to offer reimbursement funding for the purchase of water bottle filling stations (1 per 100 students) to further mitigate children’s exposure to lead. There will be a second round of the bottle filling station grant in 2026 that will open up the reimbursement funds to all public schools in Maine on a first-come, first-served basis until funds are exhausted.

Funding

In accordance with the statute, the Department is prohibited from requiring a school to expand or modify its activities to necessitate additional expenditures from local revenue. Testing costs associated with 22 MRS § 2604-B were funded using grants under the WIIN Act and with funds from the State Subsurface Wastewater Disposal Fee Fund (SWDF).

Funding Source	Amount
USEPA WIIN Grant (2019)	\$406,000
USEPA WIIN Grant (2020)	\$331,000
USEPA WIIN Grant (2021)	\$330,000
SWDF	Up to \$40,000
USEPA WIIN Grant (2024-27)	\$374,000

The 2019-2021 WIIN grant guidelines stipulated that funds could only be used to perform testing, outreach, training, and provide community education. Funds could not be used for abatement/mitigation or to reimburse schools for routine lead sampling, as required under the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA). In addition, grant funds could only be used for schools that are:

- (1) A Local Education Agency, as defined in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. §7801)
- (2) A Tribal Education Agency, as defined in the National Environmental Education Act (20 U.S.C. §5502)

Because grant funds could not be used for testing at private schools, funds under the State SWDF were used to cover sampling costs for private schools.

Funding was used to cover the cost of sample bottles, sample bottle shipment, lead water analysis, outreach, training, and education.

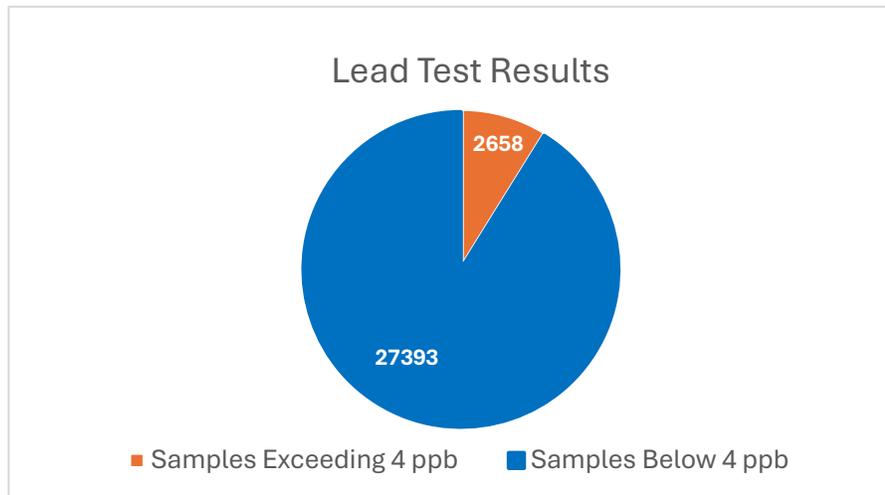
The 2024-2027 WIIN grant funding has been allocated for the reimbursement of schools purchasing water bottle filling stations. The reimbursement amount is based on student population with a rate of one station per 100 students with a maximum of five stations per school. Proof of purchase and installation is needed from schools in order to receive the reimbursement funds with a cap of \$1,500 per approved station.

Program Impact

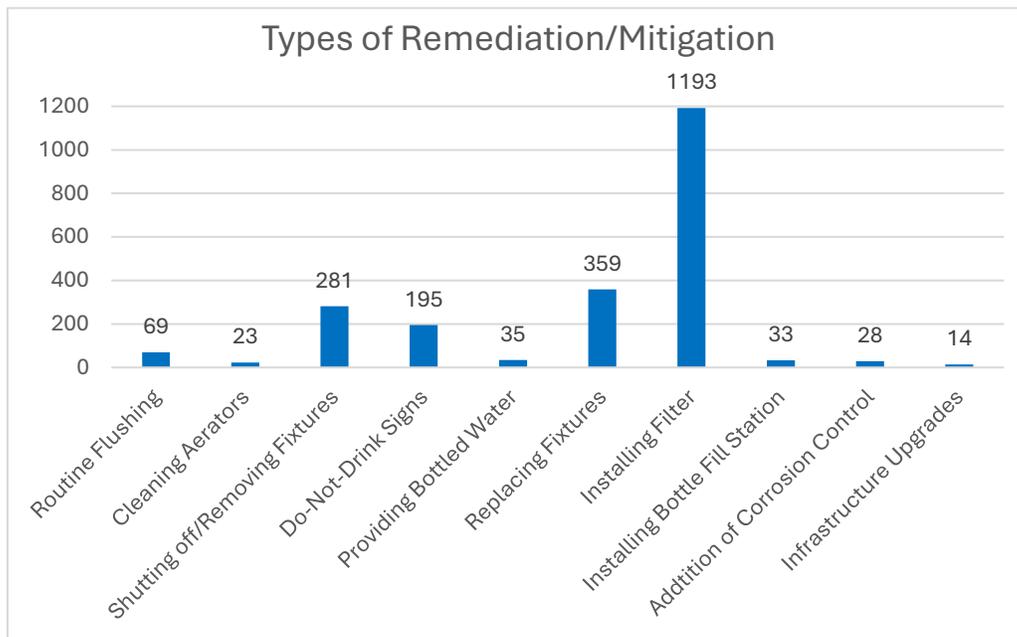
Funding is a critical factor in the statewide effort to effect change in lead exposure. Since the beginning of the program, 99 percent of all K-12 schools in Maine (713 out of 723 total schools refined from initial database estimates) tested for lead and were issued guidance for lead exposure reduction, and 493 schools reported abatement or mitigation activities. (22 MRS § 2604-B sub-§ 5).

Reporting Items for Entire Sampling Program	Count
Total Schools Tested for Lead	713
Total Schools Issues Lead Guidance for Abatement/Mitigation	713
Total Schools that Reported Abatement or Mitigation	493

Approximately nine percent of the total 30,051 samples taken exceeded 4 ppb, the threshold adopted by DWP rule in 2021 for recommending action, and received guidance on remediation and mitigation, in accordance with the US EPA's 3Ts guide for lead sampling at schools.



The table below indicates the number of schools engaged in a particular type of remediation/mitigation. Each school may be engaging in more than one type.



Per statute, the Department could not require a school to expand or modify its activities so as to necessitate additional expenditures from local revenue. After securing additional grant funds, to further encourage the mitigation of lead exposure, DWP is able to offer reimbursement for the purchase of water bottle filling stations starting in 2025. Due to limited funding available, the highest priority schools will be contacted first but a second round of funding will open in 2026 for all public schools in Maine. The reimbursement will be offered on a first-come, first-served basis until the funds are exhausted.

Conclusion

To date, the School Lead Sampling Program has resulted in 99 percent of Maine schools sampling every drinking water tap used for consumption, totaling over 30,000 individual samples. Out of the total number of samples, nine percent exceeded the State limit of four parts per billion. All initial sample results are posted on the Maine CDC DWP’s School Lead Testing webpage. This effort has successfully identified school drinking water fixtures for mitigation and resulted in a reduction of lead exposure for Maine’s school children.

The Department will contract with schools identified as priority based on Title I status and highest lead test results to offer reimbursement funding for the purchase of water bottle filling stations (one per 100 students) to further mitigate children’s exposure to lead.

The DWP will continue to follow up with schools as it relates to compliance with Public Law 2019, chapter 158.