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***CARELINK SENDS LEAD TEST KITS TO OVER 11,000 MEDICAID FAMILIES***

**CHARLESTON, W.Va., January 7, 2008** – In spite of the best efforts of parents, some lead tainted toys have likely made it into many West Virginian's homes this holiday season. So as children begin to give the toys a real workout, Carelink Health Plans, Inc. is helping many of its members determine if their children are playing with toys that may contain hazardous levels of lead.

This week Carelink is delivering over 11,000 LEAD INSPECTOR™ Premium Lead Test Kits to its Medicaid members with children under 12 years of age so that they may test toys and other surfaces in their homes for dangerous lead contamination.

“Carelink is committed to improving the of health West Virginia kids. Providing education and resources to parents on environmental hazards is part of that commitment. We want our children to play in a safe atmosphere with toys that are free from environmental hazards,” said Carelink Executive Director Gene Preston.

With the LEAD INSPECTOR's premium lead test kit, Carelink members can test toys, jewelry and other surfaces in their homes. Consumer Reports highlighted the LEAD INSPECTOR kit in its December 2007 Child Safety Report and NPR's *Morning Edition* featured the kit's developer Dave LaChance demonstrating how to use it.

"Even the smallest amounts of lead exposure, well below the federal standard, could have an effect on the learning ability of children. By identifying potential sources of contact, products containing lead can be removed from the household and limit the child's exposure," according to Carelink's Medical Director, Rod McKinney, D.O.

**Toys and Childhood Lead Exposure\***

Toys that have been made in other countries and then imported into the U.S. or antique toys and collectibles passed down through generations put children at risk for such exposure. To reduce these risks, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) issues recalls of toys that could potentially expose children to lead.

Lead may be used in two aspects of toy manufacturing.

**Paint:** Lead may be found in the paint on toys. It was banned in house paint, on products marketed to children, and in dishes or cookware in the United States in 1978; however, it is still widely used in other countries and therefore can still be found on imported toys. It may also be found on older toys made in the United States before the ban.

**Plastic:** The use of lead in plastics has not been banned. It softens the plastic and makes it more flexible so that it can go back to its original shape. It may also be used in plastic toys to stabilize molecules from heat. When the plastic is exposed to substances such as sunlight, air, and detergents the chemical bond between the lead and plastics breaks down and forms a dust.

#### **How your child may be exposed**

Lead is invisible to the naked eye and has no smell. Children may be exposed to it from consumer products through normal hand-to-mouth activity, which is part of their normal development. They often place toys, fingers, and other objects in their mouth, exposing themselves to lead paint or dust.

#### **What to do if you are concerned about your child's exposure**

If you have any reason to suspect that your child has been exposed to a toy containing lead, remove the toy immediately. Most children with elevated blood lead levels have no symptoms. The only way to tell is to have a blood lead test. Your health care provider can help you decide whether such a test is needed and can also recommend treatment if your child has been exposed.

#### **How to obtain more information about recalls**

The CPSC asks that parents check for possible recalls of their children's toys and take the toys away immediately if they have been recalled. Photos and descriptions of recalled toys can be found at <http://www.cpsc.gov> or call 1-800-638-2772.

\*Information available on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

#### ***About Carelink***

Carelink Health Plans, Inc. is a managed health care plan based in West Virginia with offices in Charleston and Wheeling. More information is available at [www.carelinkhealthplans.com](http://www.carelinkhealthplans.com).

#### ***About LEAD INSPECTOR™***

Lead Inspector is a registered trademark of Abotex, Ent. Ltd. of Ontario, Canada. More information is available at [www.leadinspector.com](http://www.leadinspector.com).

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