



Water-Smart Program for Lead in Drinking Water at Schools and Early Education and Childcare Facilities Chelsea Seminar Report October 2024

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Summary of the Event

The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection- Drinking Water Program's (MassDEP-DWP) – Water Smart* Program hosted a seminar in conjunction with the city of Chelsea and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) to raise awareness about lead exposure. It was held on September 24th from 6-8 PM at the Williams Jr. High School and a total of 54 participants attended, including childcare providers, education professionals, Chelsea officials, nonprofit organizations, DPH staff, and MassDEP staff.



Figure 1. Left to right first row Gufran Bulbul (MassDEP), Parker Honey (DPH), Jessica Burkhamer (DPH), Alex Smith-Lin (UMass), Marcela Rojas (UMass), Brandy Litt (DPH), Ana Rodriguez (Cozy Cave childcare owner), Xochitl Perez (MassDEP), Flor Amaya (City of Chelsea), Marian Berkowitz (UMass), Barbara Espinosa (GreenRoots), Jessica Sibirski (MassDEP), Tania Perez (Nurtury), Mayra Rosado (Nurtury), Jorman Mota (City of Chelsea), Amy Izen (Early Childhood Initiative), Monica Elias-Orellana (GreenRoots), Shedlove Joseph (translator). Second row Right to left: Fran Roznowski (Retired Teacher), Nishaila Porter (MassDEP), Vanessa Guardado (MAPC), Kiera Alventosa (Clean Water Action), Bernabe Rodriguez (City of Chelsea), Isaac Smith (City of Chelsea), and Michael Celona (MassDEP).

The program covered a range of topics, including lead exposure in drinking water, the free lead testing [Water-Smart Program](#), the [Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program](#), the [Choose Safe Places for Early Care and Education Program](#), the [Service Line Inventory](#), and the [Lead Service Replacement Program in Chelsea](#) (Figure 2 and 3).

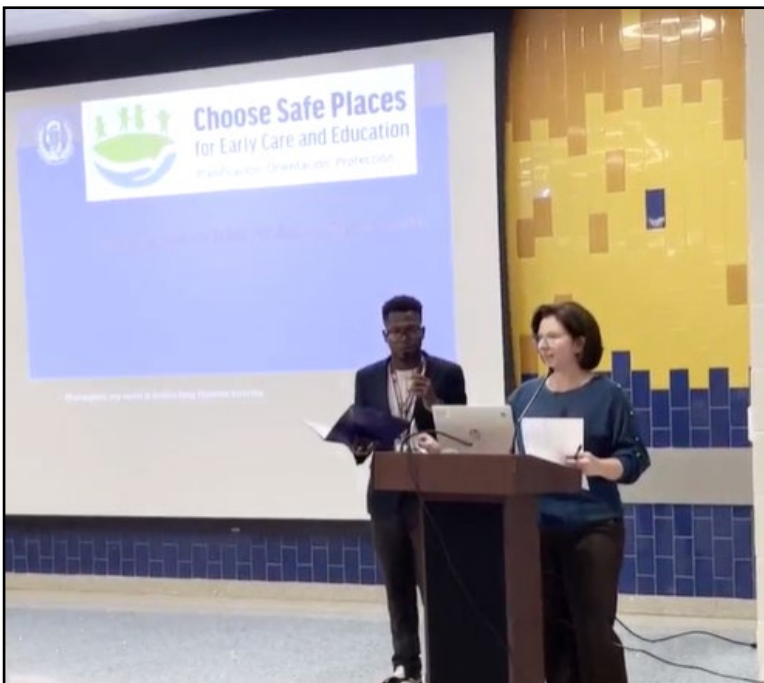


Figure 2. Jessica Burkhamer from DPH presenting the Choose Safe Places Program.

Deneen Simpson, MassDEP Director of Environmental Justice, successfully secured the necessary funding to provide meals for attendees (Figure 5). In addition to the training materials, each participant received a certificate of attendance from MassDEP-DWP, which can be applied towards the Department of Early Education and Care (DEEC) annual training requirement for childcare providers (Figure 6).

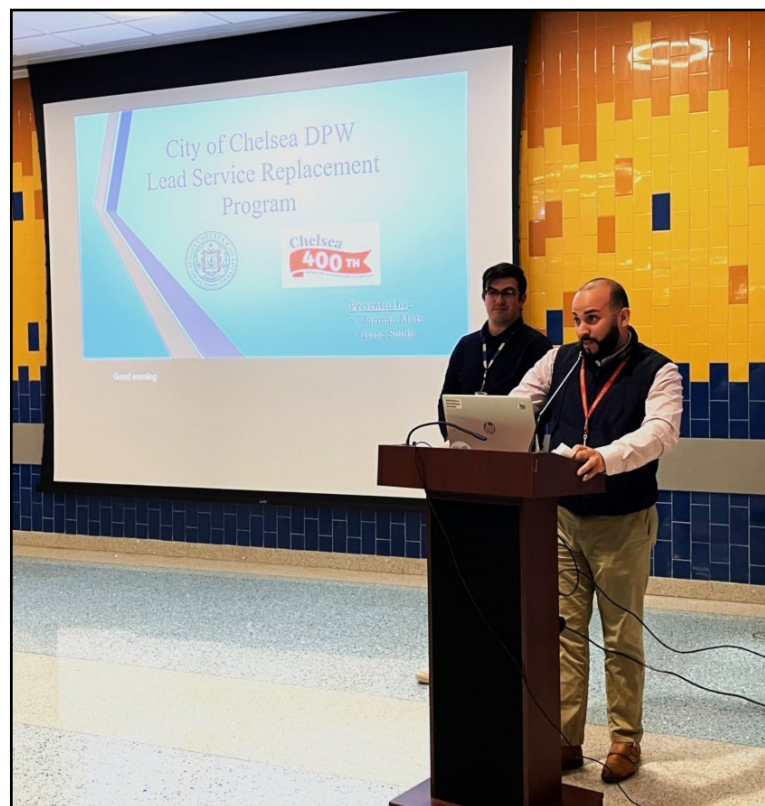


Figure 3. Isaac Smith and Jorman Mota from the Chelsea Water & Sewer Department presenting the Lead Service Replacement program.

To ensure accessibility for Spanish-speaking attendees, GreenRoots provided translation equipment (headphones and microphones), while the City of Chelsea supplied a trained interpreter (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Barbara Espinosa and Monica Elias-Orellana from GreenRoots providing translation equipment to Spanish-speaking participants.



Figure 5. Participants eating meals provided by the MassDEP Environmental Justice Program



Figure 6. Certificate of attendance provided to each participant at the end of the event.

*Formerly the Expanded Assistance Program for Lead in School Drinking Water. Water-Smart is funded through the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIIN) Act and MassDEP.

Our Collaborators

The City of Chelsea was identified as a High-Risk Community in the 2022 Annual Childhood Lead Poisoning Surveillance Report as well is categorized as a disadvantaged community (Tier 3) with an Environmental Justice (EJ) population. In an effort to protect children’s health, Flor M. Amaya Lopez, Chelsea’s Director of Public Health assembled a diverse group of collaborators (Figure 7) to assist the community. This coalition includes representatives from nonprofit organizations such as [Early Childhood Initiative](#), [GreenRoots](#), [Clean Water Action](#) as well as key players in childcare systems: Tania Perez and Mayra Rosado from [Nurtury](#), Darling Ortiz and Rosalina Pinto from [Clarendon](#) and Claudia Vega from [Child Development and Education](#). Chelsea resident Fran Roznowski is also contributing to this collaborative effort. Together, this group is dedicated to reaching out to and educating the community about the childrens health (Figure 7 and 9). After the seminar, a children's book was distributed to raise awareness about lead exposure in the environment (Figure 8).



Figure 7. Monica Elias-Orellana (GreenRoots), Flor Amaya (City of Chelsea), Bernabe Rodriguez (City of Chelsea), Karl Allen (City of Chelsea), Barbara Espinosa (GreenRoots), and Tania Perez (Nurtury).



Figure 8. Children book “Happy, Healthy, Lead-Free Me!” distributed at the seminar.

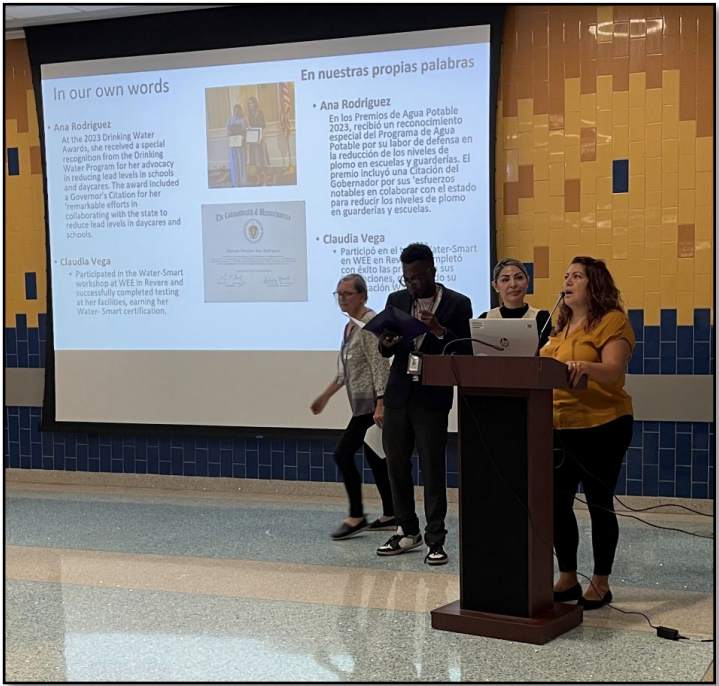


Figure 9. Claudia Vega and Ana Rodriguez, childcare owners, sharing their experiences participating in the Water-Smart Program.

Water-Smart Program and Future Work in Chelsea

Since 1988, the [Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection](#) (MassDEP) [Drinking Water Program](#) (DWP) has taken a proactive stance in addressing and eliminating lead in school drinking water. The Water-Smart Program is a voluntary program for public and private schools and licensed early education and care facilities that offers technical assistance with lead in drinking water outreach and education, water testing, and support for remediation actions. Upon completion of the program, facilities are provided with a certificate of completion to display.



Figure 10. Jessica Sibirski (MassDEP) presenting the Water-Smart Program and the Service Line Inventory.

Following this seminar, the Water-Smart Program will continue collaborating with Chelsea partners to encourage all childcare facilities in the city to participate in lead testing. The goal is to ensure that any facilities with lead concentrations above the laboratory analytical testing limit of 1 part per billion (ppb or µg/L) take the necessary remediation actions based on program recommendations. So far, 30% (11) of the Family-Based Child Care centers in Chelsea have agreed to participate in the program, and 19% have already completed the testing. Additionally, to engage and educate parents and the Chelsea community, Clean Water Action, in collaboration with the City of Chelsea, will host a free information session on October 23 from 6:00 to 8:00 PM at the Chelsea Public Library (Figure 11). The session will focus on lead in drinking water, including ways residents can assist the Chelsea Water & Sewer Department in completing their lead service inventories. Participants will also learn about the benefits their childcare facilities can gain by joining the Water-Smart Program. The event will feature free refreshments and complimentary water filters for attendees. For more information email Kiera Alventosa: kalventosa@cleanwater.org

More information:

- Water-Smart Story Map: <https://mass-eoeaa.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=c8f635cf3a4b443998245f6045b4c013>
- Water-Smart Webpage: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/technical-assistance-for-lead-in-school-and-child-care-center-drinking-water>
- Lead and Copper in School Drinking Water Results: <https://eeaaonline.eea.state.ma.us/portal#!/search/leadandcopper>
- MassDEP Drinking Water Program: program.director-dwp@mass.gov Subject: Lead in Schools Drinking Water or 617-292-2770 or UMass-DEP LCCA-Program: lccadep@umass.edu or 413-545-0840



Figure 11. Flyer available in both English and Spanish for the free informational session: "Lead in Drinking Water."