

Case Study – Reading, PA

Case Study: Building a Local Lead Coalition – Reading, Pennsylvania

In October 2019, representatives from the Reading Area Water Authority (RAWA) and Reading, Pa. chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) attended the Mid-Atlantic Lead Forum, hosted by U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 3. Although lead service lines were not a prevalent problem in Reading, there were other lead issues that presented challenges to the small city with few resources and a majority non-English speaking population. After the Mid-Atlantic Lead Forum, Reading's next steps to address lead were to build local capacity by gathering local constituent, and garnering public support to create a sustainable lead program.

Planning a Lead Forum

The Reading Area Water Authority was inspired by the 2019 Mid-Atlantic Lead Forum and wanted to host a similar lead forum for the Reading, Pa. area. The Reading Lead Forum, like the Mid-Atlantic Lead Forum, would bring together representatives from multiple agencies and organizations throughout the community, region, and state, to spread awareness of local lead issues and build coalitions for addressing them.

RAWA already had many contacts and speakers, including state government representatives, along with local agencies and community organizations that represented various stakeholders and were knowledgeable about the history of lead in the area.

EPA Region 3 representatives supported this effort driven by the Reading Area Water Authority and invited partners to assist RAWA and NAACP in planning the lead forum. These partners included representatives from the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), state agencies such as the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, and the neighboring city of Lancaster, Pa.

Reading Lead Forum

The Reading Lead Forum was held in February 2020 at the Reading Area Water Authority building and attended by more than 40 people, including local, state and federal representatives. Its agenda featured a legislative briefing, an overview of lead in water, a community perspective, a presentation on Lancaster's lead program, and time for discussion and questions among the attendees.

A key benefit of holding the forum was the convergence of various stakeholders to discuss the history, present concerns, challenges and next steps for lead in the Reading area. This was an initial step toward building a sustainable lead program in Reading and creating a local lead coalition to advance these efforts. EPA continues to partner with RAWA and NAACP regularly and supports their efforts and engagement with the City of Reading.



Beyond the Forum

Since developing its [Local Lead Action Plan](#), the local lead program continues to guide and coordinate the plan's priority actions, which are currently focused on lead testing, pursuing grant funding, training, and conducting lead outreach. The City of Reading hosts bi-weekly virtual meetings with stakeholders, allowing its partners to be aware of lead-related progress and next steps, contribute ideas and updates, and work through challenges together.