

Using Worker Focus Groups to Evaluate a Worker Lead Brochure in New York State

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Background

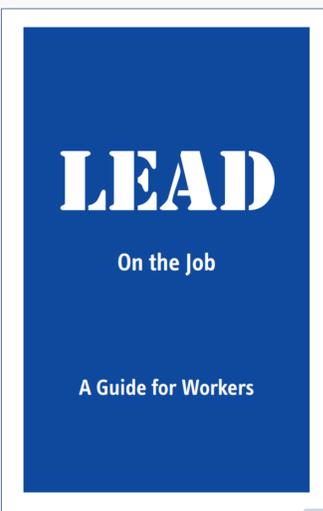
Printed materials have been used extensively as an educational tool to increase worker knowledge regarding lead. Often materials are developed by public health professionals who do not have experience in the field working with lead hazards. The New York State Department of Health's (NYSDOH) Center for Environmental Health (CEH) used worker focus groups to evaluate the Heavy Metals Registry's (HMR) 'Lead on the Job' brochure.

As a qualitative research tool, focus groups can be used to assess perceptions and beliefs to inform the development of materials or to evaluate components of existing materials. Open-ended questions encourage a dialogue to get at both individual and group thinking.

Methods

The 'Lead on the Job - A Guide for Workers' brochure is designed to provide educational information regarding the hazards of working with lead, and is mailed to New York State residents or workers who are reported to the HMR with blood lead levels greater than or equal to 10 µg/dL.

Original brochure was a 7-page booklet form

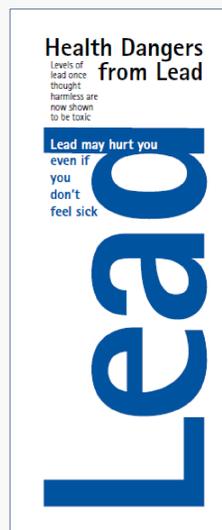


The brochure was modified using in-house staff.

Priorities for new brochure were:

- more graphics to convey key messages
- simple text
- tri-fold format to allow for easier distribution and mailing
- Increased emphasis on health effects at lower lead levels

Redesigned brochure cover



Traditional focus groups:

- 8-12 participants with 3-5 different groups is ideal
- 60- 120 minutes in length
- Needs moderator (preferably experienced) and observer/recorder for group

Focus Group Logistics

The logistics are often the most time-consuming element of preparing to conduct a focus group.

- Identifying participants, in this case, lead companies and/or hobbyists willing to work with us can be difficult. Providing incentives to participation, such as refreshments or small gifts, is helpful.

Focus Group Interview Guide

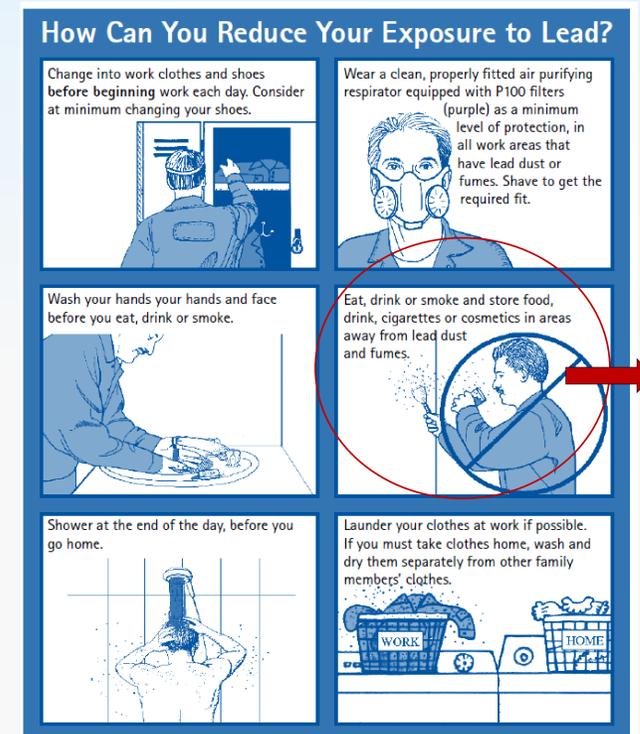
A focus group interview guide was designed with open-ended questions that promote discussion. A few examples of questions are provided below:

I want to get your reaction to the brochure. First, I am going to ask you some general questions:

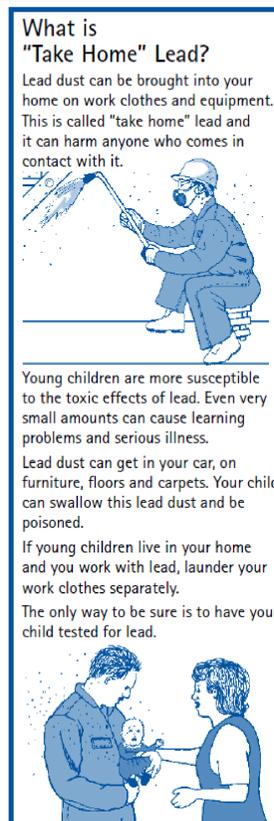
- Overall, what did you think of it? What did you look at first – what caught your eye? What did you like most about the brochure? What did you like least about the brochure? Was there anything that you thought was missing?

I want to ask you some questions about this section with the six pictures.

- Does the order of the pictures make sense? Do the words make sense? Are there any phrases or words that are not clear? Are the pictures clear? Confusing? How did you interpret the dots? Can you get the message from the pictures alone or do you think you also need the words?
- What do you think is meant by the phrase "exposure to lead?" For people who have jobs where they may be exposed to lead, what do you think is the most important thing for them to know? There are six ways on this page that workers can reduce their exposure to lead. Are there others? What did we miss?



This picture will be modified since participants did not like it.



I want to ask you about this section about "take home lead."

- Does that phrase make sense to you? Can you get the message from the pictures alone or do you think you also need the words? What are your ideas for communicating this information more effectively?

This section was deemed "very important" by all focus group participants.

Results/Conclusions

In general, the modified version of the brochure was well received by focus group audiences. Only small modifications were needed to finalize the brochure.

From a process perspective, participants were pleased to be asked for their opinions, and even the more experienced workers seemed happy to discuss and share thoughts.

Focus groups are useful for:

- Acquiring feedback on health brochures
- Ensuring information is understood
- Creating health messages that are practical

FOCUS GROUPS SHOULD BE USED MORE FREQUENTLY WHEN DEVELOPING PUBLIC HEALTH OUTREACH.