



PUBLIC HEALTH Preparedness Update



DCHHS Defends Dallas County against West Nile Virus

Mosquito season in Dallas County typically runs from May to October with peak activity in August. However, with the recent warm temperatures and rains Dallas County is seeing an early increase in mosquito activity. DCHHS is redoubling its efforts to detect, prevent and control the spread of West Nile virus and other mosquito-borne illnesses. A part of its efforts is a public education campaign “D-fend



Shown left to right: Mike Ackermann, Kathi Ackermann, parents of a West Nile Survivor; Dr. John Carlo, DCHHS Medical Director; Zachary Thompson, DCHHS Director; Dr. Don Read, West Nile Survivor and founder of the West Nile Survivors Support Group; Tony Jenkins, Assistant Director DCHHS Environmental Health; Scott Sawlis, DCHHS Entomologist/Vector Control Supervisor; Rodger Jayroe, City of Dallas Manager of Environmental Assessment and Dr. Edward Bannister, DCHHS Assistant Director, Public Health Laboratory.

Against West Nile: Dress, Drain & wear DEET” to inform the public about West Nile virus and to remind them of ways to protect themselves and their families.

“DCHHS is launching a public education and marketing campaign to get the word out early about the dangers of West Nile virus,” DCHHS Director Zachary Thompson said. The DCHHS public education campaign includes a weekly publication, the *West Nile Watch*, which contains information on the location of infected mosquito pools and mitigation efforts in the county. To receive a copy of the *West Nile Watch*, send an email to westnile@dallascounty.org.

“I want to commend DCHHS for being one of the first agencies in Texas to launch its 2007 West Nile virus prevention campaign,” said Dallas County Commissioner John Wiley Price, who also chairs the Dallas County Public Health Advisory Committee. “DCHHS is out on the forefront of this issue, educating and preparing the public against West Nile disease,” Commissioner Price concluded.

DCHHS continues to work with its municipal partners on additional strategies to protect Dallas County residents from mosquito-borne illnesses. DCHHS West Nile prevention activities include surveillance, mitigation, and public

education.

DCHHS has received gravid traps and Global Positioning System (GPS) units from the Texas Department of State Health Services. These tools will be used to collect mosquitoes for early detection of West Nile Virus and to record trap locations. The equipment will be distributed to municipalities to enhance mosquito surveillance throughout the county.

“The cornerstone to all mosquito-borne diseases control is mosquito surveillance,” said DCHHS Entomologist/Vector Control Supervisor, Scott Sawlis. “In 2006, we saw an early season increase in mosquito populations and infection rates of mosquitoes. This paralleled subsequent human cases. Our goal is early detection of mosquito infections so we may implement control measures sooner in order to prevent and reduce the number of human cases,” Sawlis continued.

For more information about mosquito control activities in Dallas County, call the DCHHS Environmental Health Division at 214-819-2115.

Be a Local Hero, Join the MRC

The mission of the Dallas County Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) is to assist the local community during a public health emergency by providing a rapid, coordinated and specific response using locally recruited medical, mental health and public health volunteers appropriately trained in the latest emergency response methods.



largest of its kind in the nation.

Each volunteer receives free training on a continuous basis. Dallas County MRC volunteers may be used in any number of public health preparedness efforts to improve the health and well-being of their neighborhoods and communities. Dallas County ensures appropriate volunteer skills and confidence through a spe-

cialized training and drill schedule. Dallas County Medical Reserve Corps has been recognized nationally for its efforts during the DCHHS response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. For more information on the MRC, call (214) 819-1922.

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Dallas County Health and Human Services Recognizes World Tuberculosis Day

Dallas County Health and Human Services (DCHHS) observed World Tuberculosis (TB) Day by recognizing its frontline TB care providers who diligently work every day to battle TB. "As a major metropolitan area with a large international airport and increased international refugee resettlement and immigrant populations, we continue to see tuberculosis in Dallas County," DCHHS Director Zachary Thompson said. "The work and commitment of our dedicated TB staff is critical in detecting and treating TB in Dallas County."

DCHHS Tuberculosis Elimination Division has many services available to the public and to the health care profession; among them are providing consultation and information to health professionals on TB related matters, medication therapy through the direct observed preventive therapy, to school age children in a collaborative effort with area school districts, case management of TB cases, referrals to other agencies or providers when appropriate, disease surveillance and investigation, and complete evaluation and treatment for tuberculosis infection or disease upon referral from other health care providers.

"About 95 percent of the TB patients in Dallas County are treated and cared for by DCHHS staff," said Dr. John Carlo, DCHHS Medical Director and Health Authority. "TB Outreach Work-



ers directly observe patients taking their medications to ensure that the patient follows treatment guidelines and to observe any side effects that may occur." In recent years, DCHHS has expanded its TB detection network. TB staff regularly visit homeless shelters to test the homeless population for TB. TB staff also works with Parkland Hospital and other service providers to provide health screenings, TB screenings and immunizations for newly arrived refugees in Dallas County. In August 2006, the DCHHS Public Health Laboratory initiated Quantiferon testing, a sensitive and accurate blood test used in lieu of the Tuberculosis (TB) skin test to screen patients for TB infection. Quantiferon testing increases DCHHS' ability to diagnose and treat TB infection by eliminating the need for two visits required by traditional skin tests. Test results are available in 24 hours.

Tuberculosis is one of the leading causes of death from infectious diseases worldwide. An estimated 2 billion peo-

ple are infected with the bacteria that cause TB. Approximately 2 million people die each year from TB. World TB Day is the anniversary of the World Health Organization's (WHO) declaration of TB as a global health emergency—the only such emergency ever declared by WHO. ***TB Anywhere is TB Everywhere*** was the theme for 2007 World TB Day, March 24th, which offered a message of urgency and shared responsibility. The 2007 theme emphasizes that although TB is a preventable and curable disease, it remains a global emergency.

DCHHS' TB Prevention Program offers Quantiferon testing (Monday – Thursday) and PPD skin testing each weekday (except Thursday) from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. at its main building, 2377 N. Stemmons Freeway. Chest x-rays are also available weekdays by appointment only. For more information on the DCHHS TB Prevention Program, call 214-819-2071 or visit www.dallascounty.org.

DCHHS Urges Residents to Prepare for Health Emergencies During National Public Health Week 2007

Dallas County Health and Human Services (DCHHS) will join the American Public Health Association (APHA) and hundreds of partner organizations to encourage Dallas County residents to prepare effectively for public health threats, from bioterrorism and natural disasters to disease outbreaks, during National Public Health Week, April 2-8, 2007.

As part of the weeklong observance, themed "Preparedness and Public Health Threats: Addressing the Unique Needs of the Nation's Vulnerable Populations," DCHHS will reach-out to vulnerable populations, including mothers with young children, hourly-wage workers and people with chronic illnesses such



as diabetes and asthma, to encourage them to take the first step to prepare for health emergencies. A September 2006 poll conducted by Marist College Institute for Public Opinion noted that only 31 percent of Americans have any emergency plans in place.

"Each household, each business owner should ask themselves, 'Am I prepared?' 'Have I taken all the steps necessary to ensure the welfare of my family and employees?,' said Zachary Thompson, DCHHS Director. "We encourage all Dallas County residents, especially the more vulnerable populations, to start now on their personal preparedness plans to be ready for any emergency situation." Dallas County has a website dedicated to Public Health Preparedness that contains a Personal Preparedness Guide and other information and resources to prepare each household and business for a public health emergency.

Dallas County Forms Task Force to Address Cheese Heroin

Dallas County Commissioner Kenneth A. Mayfield has announced the formation of a countywide task force to address the cheese heroin epidemic in Dallas County. The task force is comprised of community leaders from different disciplines.

“Dallas County has been especially hard-hit by the introduction of cheese heroin to younger teens,” said Kenneth A. Mayfield, Dallas County Commissioner District 4. “We are convening this small group of community leaders to develop an action plan to address the heroin epidemic affecting our youth.”

Cheese Heroin is a cheap and highly addictive recreational drug that has gained popularity since it first came on the scene in 2005. Made by combining heroin and crushed tablets of certain over-the-counter common cold medication, cheese heroin is considered a starter drug and is being used by children as young as 12 years of age. This has led to an epidemic of cheese heroin users and deaths among middle and high school age students.

“The long-term impact of crack cocaine and methamphetamines has



Shown left to right: Zachary Thompson, Director-Dallas County Health and Human Services; Dallas County Commissioner Kenneth A. Mayfield and Mike Griffiths, Director - Dallas County Juvenile Department.

increased the numbers of people needing drug abuse treatment services,” said Zachary Thompson, DCHHS Director. “These drugs have also contributed to an increase in the number of new homeless people attributed to drug addictions. We can now add the highly-addictive drug cheese heroin to the new wave of dangerous drugs that are negatively impacting Dallas County,” Thompson continued.

Cheese heroin is extraordinarily addictive, with many first-time users experiencing withdrawal symptoms only six hours after their initial use.

There have been a total of 13 drug related deaths among adolescents in Dallas County so far in 2007. In response to the rising use of cheese heroin, DCHHS has issued a Health Alert to area hospitals, clinics and doctor offices to raise the awareness of the signs and symptoms of cheese heroin use and addiction.

DCHHS urges parents of children addicted to the recreational drug cheese heroin to seek treatment at a rehabilitation facility so that the symptoms of withdrawal can be managed. As with any addiction, seeking rehabilitation during recovery provides optimal outcomes.

DCHHS also recommends that parents caring for a child addicted to cheese heroin who are unable to place their child in a rehabilitation program, should consult their healthcare provider for help in dealing with withdrawal symptoms. Symptoms of addiction in users of cheese heroin include sleepiness, difficulty waking up, disorientation, flu-like symptoms, nausea, vomiting, anxiety caused by withdrawal, personality changes, and aggressive behavior.

DCHHS Hosts Weatherization Assistance Program Training

Recently, Dallas County Health and Human Services hosted a training seminar for Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) staff. The training, which is required by the U. S. Department of Energy, drew participation from six neighboring WAP programs, in addition to DCHHS staff.

The training topics included Mold, Residential Energy Code (REC) and the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) standards. The Mold training specialized in the recognition of conditions that promote mold growth that may be encountered in Weatherization work, and how best to prevent and treat mold. Active mold growth indoors is not normal and can present health risks to clients.

The REC and ASHRAE trainings were on specification of Energy, efficient installation and maintenance practices for residential HVAC systems. It explained



Shown left to right: Zachary Thompson, DCHHS Director, J.R. Mendoza, Sr. Training Officer, Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA), and Daniel Araiza, DCHHS WAP Program

the importance of increased comfort levels, quality of life, and decreased utility cost for the clients. According to the Electric Power Research Institute, energy savings from duct improvement measures will save the average customer \$300 per year.

DCHHS operates Dallas County

Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP). The program offers clients a review of their home's energy efficiency, by identifying possible air leaks, inefficient appliances and installing of weatherization measures to increase energy efficiency of a home. DCHHS' Weatherization Assistance Program has professionally trained crews who use computerized energy audits and advanced diagnostic equipment to identify energy-saving strategies in single-family, multi-family, and mobile homes. Cost-effective weatherization measures and those that are essential for health and safety are then performed.

The Dallas County WAP provides assistance to income eligible households by weatherizing their homes to promote energy conservation and reduce the impact of high utility cost to households. For eligibility requirements, phone (214) 819-1909 or visit www.dallascounty.org.

DCHHS Celebrates National Infant Immunization Week

National Infant Immunization Week April 21-28, 2007

Love them. Protect them. Immunize them.

Working together with Vaccination Week in the Americas

Vaccination: an act of love



In celebration of National Infant Immunization Week (NIIW), Dallas County Health and Human Services (DCHHS) will conduct special infant immunization clinics across the county. The clinics are being held in conjunction with the Immunize Kids Dallas Area Partnership.

National Infant Immunization Week (NIIW), April 22-29, 2006, is an annual observance established 12 years ago by the Department of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to remind parents, health professionals, and the public that children deserve a healthy start to life by immunizing them against vaccine-preventable diseases.

“It is extremely important for every child to receive all the necessary shots to assure good health,” said Dr. John Carlo, DCHHS Medical Director. “Infants and young children are particularly vulnerable to infectious diseases; that is why it is critical that they are protected through immunization.”

Vaccines are among the most successful and cost-effective public health tools available for preventing disease and death. They not only help protect vaccinated individuals from developing potentially serious diseases, they also help protect entire communities by preventing and reducing the spread of infectious agents.

DCHHS’ goal is to provide barrier-

free vaccines year round to help protect the health and welfare of all infants and children in Dallas County. DCHHS offers childhood immunizations from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, on the first floor of the DCHHS building, 2377 N. Stemmons Freeway, Dallas, TX, 75207. The clinic is open Wednesdays from 8 a.m.—6 p.m. While the cost is \$10 for children on their first visit, and \$5 for children who have previously visited the clinic, no one will be refused service due to their inability to pay. No appointment is necessary. For more information, call 214-819-2163.

During NIIW US cities will join other communities from Canada to the tip of South America and throughout the Caribbean to participate in Vaccination Week in the Americas (VWA). VWA unites over 35 countries in the Western Hemisphere to highlight the benefits of vaccination and the need for routine vaccinations.

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