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January 5, 2017
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Update on Measles Investigation from Public Health

On December 29, 2016 a case of measles was confirmed in Santa Barbara. The only exposures the patient had in Santa Barbara took place the evening of Tuesday, December 27, 2016 as stated in a prior press release. Because of the highly contagious nature of this air-borne virus, and the fact that the Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) vaccine must be given within 72 hours of exposure to prevent disease in vulnerable contacts, public health staff worked quickly.

On Friday, December 30 the Public Health Department activated our Department Operations Center (DOC) with more than 20 employees working to identify contacts and administer the MMR vaccine within the 72 hour deadline. A total of 45 contacts to the patient were identified and assessed for their immunization and health status. 10 MMR vaccines were administered at the DOC. One person was placed in quarantine.

Because the incubation period for the measles virus is 21 days, all 45 contacts will continue to be monitored by Disease Control until January 17th. The DOC remains functional until that date and plans are in place should a second measles case develop. "We train for situations like this and move quickly when they happen," said Dr. Charity Dean, Health Officer. "Protecting the vulnerable in our community is top priority."

Measles is a serious disease and can cause encephalitis, pneumonia, and even death. The outcomes are particularly serious for young children, pregnant women, and those with weakened immune systems. In the decade before 1963 when a vaccine became available, it is estimated three to four million people in the United States were infected annually. Each year an estimated 400 to 500 people died, 48,000 were hospitalized, and 4,000 suffered encephalitis (swelling of the brain) from measles.

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