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Contact: Rohish Lal (707) 565-6625

[Rohish.Lal@sonoma-county.org](mailto:Rohish.Lal@sonoma-county.org)

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**Letter Sent to Parents on Current Measles Outbreak**

*Although currently no measles cases in the County, letter informs parents of potential*

**SANTA ROSA, CA** — In the midst of the current state and nationwide measles outbreaks, a letter informing parents on the importance of vaccinations to prevent illness was sent from Sonoma County Health Officer Dr. Celeste Philip.

“I would like to encourage all unvaccinated children receive the measles vaccine as soon as possible during this current outbreak,” said Dr. Philip. “Vaccinations are safe and the most effective way to prevent many childhood diseases.”

The letter was sent yesterday to parents of students enrolled in County public schools by the Sonoma County Office of Education (SCOE).

Dr. Philip emphasizes in her letter to parents and guardians the seriousness of this current measles outbreak and the potential impact to unvaccinated or under vaccinated children.

As of May 10, 2019, there have been 44 cases in California and over 764 cases in the U.S. in 2019. This is the highest number of cases of measles since it was nearly eliminated in 2000. Several Bay Area counties have reported cases in this outbreak. Sonoma County has reported no cases of measles, however is still vulnerable.

**About Measles**

Measles is a very contagious airborne illness and is highly preventable through vaccination. The virus is spread by sharing the same air with an infected person, especially if that person coughs or sneezes. Individuals are contagious four days before they develop a rash and may unknowingly make others ill.

Measles usually starts with a high fever, runny nose, red and irritated eyes, and then a rash. The rash is red and bumpy, starts on the face and moves down the body.

Even in previously healthy children, measles can cause serious illness requiring hospitalization. Common complications are ear or throat infections. Less common but more serious complications are pneumonia and brain swelling. In some cases it can even be fatal.

It takes two weeks to develop immunity after receiving a measles vaccine. Unvaccinated or under vaccinated children should be vaccinated as soon as possible through their healthcare provider so they will have protection, will not further spread illness and will not need to be absent from school.

SCOE Superintendent Steven D. Herrington, Ph.D., said he shares the concerns of Dr. Philip and supports the letter in the interest of safety and wellbeing for students in County public schools.

“Schools and parents have the same goal, ensuring the safety and health of each child, so that they are free to learn,” said Dr. Herrington. “I commend our County health officer for proactively providing this important information to local parents and guardians.”

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The letter can be found online at the SCOE news page here:

[https://www.scoe.org/pub/htdocs/news-archive.html?news\\_id=1187](https://www.scoe.org/pub/htdocs/news-archive.html?news_id=1187)