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Dear Homeless Providers:

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (Public Health) has declared a local outbreak of hepatitis A (HAV) in Los Angeles County. Public Health has been proactively working to provide HAV education, outreach, and vaccination for homeless populations, active drug users, and those that provide services and support to those individuals.

Ten total cases of hepatitis A have been confirmed. These cases are associated with homeless or illicit drug-using individuals or in institutions that serve the homeless in Los Angeles County. Of these cases, five occurred among people who had travelled from San Diego or Santa Cruz counties, which have ongoing outbreaks of hepatitis A; three occurred in an institution following contact with a case; and two appear to have been acquired locally.

We are also requesting your assistance in reaching out to homeless residents and service providers to promote vaccination. For persons without access to hepatitis A vaccine through a health care provider, Public Health will have vaccine available at its Public Health Centers located throughout the County.

HAV causes acute liver disease, which may be severe. It is transmitted by contact with the feces of a person infected – often through contact with food or water or during sex or other close contact. HAV can survive on hard surfaces for days highlighting the importance of appropriate cleaning and disinfection. Symptoms of hepatitis A may last weeks to months. There is no specific treatment. Disease prevention through vaccination, hygiene, and sanitation are the primary control strategies.

A large hepatitis A outbreak is currently ongoing in San Diego with over 400 cases occurring since November 2016. Spread of this disease in San Diego ignited an outbreak in Santa Cruz County, which has had over 50 cases. The large majority of cases have occurred in persons who are homeless and/or use illicit drugs (injection and non-injection), with several cases also occurring among people who provide services to the homeless.

We will soon be providing an informational tele-briefing on the HAV outbreak, response actions, prevention, and sanitation recommendations. In the meantime, if you would like additional information or assistance, please call 877-777-5799.

Sincerely,

Barbara Ferrer, Ph.D., M.P.H., M.Ed.  
Director

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