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COUNTY OF ORANGE HEALTH CARE AGENCY

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

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FOR INFORMATION ONLY

June 23, 2010

TO: Supervisor Janet Nguyen, First District, Chair
Supervisor, Bill Campbell, Third District, Vice-Chair
Supervisor John M. W. Moorlach, Second District
Supervisor Shawn Nelson, Fourth District
Supervisor Patricia C. Bates, Fifth District

SUBJECT: Pertussis Increase, Orange County and California

As you may have seen in recent media reports, California is experiencing a peak year for pertussis (whooping cough). This is the highest level of activity since 2005 when over 3,000 cases were reported, including eight infant deaths. Thus far in 2010, 910 cases of pertussis have been reported in the state, including five infant deaths.

Though Orange County has seen an increase over last year, it is not as pronounced as other parts of the state. The best marker of activity is the "rate" or number of cases per 100,000 people in the population. The Orange County pertussis rate for 2010 year-to-date is approximately 3.2 cases (confirmed or suspected) per 100,000. In some areas of the state rates are as high as 40-50 per 100,000. Orange County's current rate is about 28% higher than the rate of 2.5 cases per 100,000 for all of 2009 and could top the 2005 (last peak year) rate of 3.9 cases per 100,000. There have been no Orange County pertussis deaths reported this year.

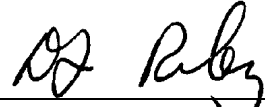
Pertussis is a vaccine-preventable illness. However several factors continue to make pertussis a serious health risk to infants. First, infants cannot be fully immunized by vaccine until about six months of age, leaving them vulnerable to illness and even death. Second, the protection provided by vaccine is not life long, and children last immunized against pertussis at kindergarten entry are again susceptible by adolescence. And lastly, immunization rates for the Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis) booster vaccine, which made pertussis vaccine available to adults since 2005, are low in teens and adults. Therefore, a large proportion of Californians remain susceptible to pertussis.

The Health Care Agency, in association with partners such as the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Children and Families Commission, the California Immunization Coalition Pertussis Task Force and Orange County birthing hospitals, has implemented a number of strategies, to mitigate pertussis in Orange County. These include promoting the use of the Tdap vaccine (particularly in those who have contact with infants); clinician and public education; and enhanced surveillance and control measures.

Members, Board of Supervisors
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Updated information is available on the Health Care Agency website at www.ochealthinfo.com and members of the public may also call the Health Care Agency Health Referral Line at 1-800-564-8448 for more information.

If you have any questions about this matter, please contact David Souleles, Deputy Agency Director for Public Health Services, at 714-834-3882.



David L. Riley, Director

DLR:dwt : 10-059

cc: Thomas G. Mauk, County Executive Officer
Stephen Dunivent, Deputy CEO