



STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN RESOURCES

**Bureau for Public Health
Commissioner's Office**

**Rahul Gupta, MD, MPH, MBA, FACP
Commissioner
State Health Officer**

**Bill J. Crouch
Cabinet Secretary**

MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 23, 2018

TO: Local Health Departments

FROM: Rahul Gupta, MD, MPH, MBA, FACP
Commissioner and State Health Officer *RG*

RE: Recommendation to Vaccinate Food Service Workers in Response to Hepatitis A Outbreak

The West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, Bureau for Public Health (BPH) has been investigating hepatitis A cases that have been linked to a multi-state outbreak since March 2018. As of May 21, 2018, 106 confirmed cases have been reported in eight (8) West Virginia counties with 82% of cases occurring in Kanawha and Putnam counties. Injection and non-injection drug use have been reported in approximately 70% of cases, and eight (8) food handlers have been identified through the investigation. This outbreak has been challenging to public health officials because of the mobile nature of cases. To stop the spread of the disease, BPH is working to vaccinate individuals at highest risk for hepatitis A and contacts of hepatitis A cases.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) currently recommends vaccinating injection and non-injection drug users, men who have sex with men, homeless or highly mobile individuals, persons who have close contact, care for, or live with someone who has hepatitis A, and persons who were incarcerated within the past six weeks. Food service employees are not considered at an increased risk for hepatitis A because of their occupation or risk of transmitting hepatitis A infection to other people. Even during outbreaks, transmission from food service employees to restaurant patrons is extremely low. A 2015 report from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) indicated the highest rate of illicit drug use by industry was among those in accommodation and food services (https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/report_1959/ShortReport-1959.html). Because of the high incidence of injection and non-injection drug use reported in West Virginia and among the food service industry, BPH recommends that all food service employees in Kanawha and Putnam counties be vaccinated against hepatitis A. This communication is being sent to all health departments in West Virginia to provide situational awareness. This recommendation is for Kanawha and Putnam counties only, and at this time does not require additional action from any other counties.

Three vaccination clinics will be offered for food service employees and those at highest risk for hepatitis A. A single dose of hepatitis A vaccine has been shown to be effective in outbreak situations. Vaccination will be billed to insurance companies for those with insurance. For

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individuals without insurance who are food service employees or at highest risk for the disease, vaccination will be free of charge. Clinics will be held on May 25, 2018, May 30, 2018, and June 1, 2018.

For details on vaccination clinics or additional information on hepatitis A, visit the Office of Epidemiology and Prevention Services' website at https://dhhr.wv.gov/oeps/disease/viral-hepatitis/pages/hepA_outbreak.aspx.