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**TO: Substance Use Treatment, Behavioral Health, and Mental Health Facilities; Homeless and Housing Assistance Providers; Board and Care Facilities; and Food Pantry Providers**

**Subject: PREVENTING HEPATITIS A IN YOUR FACILITIES – Updated October 25, 2017**

(This communication supersedes the version sent early October 2017.)

A large outbreak of hepatitis A infections is ongoing in multiple areas of California. Most people who have become ill in the outbreaks have reported experiencing homelessness and/or using illicit drugs (injection or non-injection).

Hepatitis A virus is spread through fecally contaminated food or drink, sexual contact, or touching contaminated objects and then touching the mouth. Hepatitis A virus is shed in feces and people infected with hepatitis A who do not thoroughly wash their hands after defecating can spread the infection to others. Hepatitis A infection is typically a self-limited illness, but severe and even fatal illness can occur in people with underlying health conditions, particularly those with chronic liver diseases such as alcoholic cirrhosis, and hepatitis B and hepatitis C infection. **Hepatitis A vaccine and thorough hand hygiene can prevent the disease.**

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) strongly recommends your facility follow the steps below to help prevent the spread of hepatitis A:

- **Assess clients for potential signs of hepatitis A infection during and after intake.**
  - Screen clients for fever, fatigue, nausea, loss of appetite, yellowing of skin or eyes, stomach pain, vomiting, dark urine, pale stools, and diarrhea. Consider adapting San Diego County's [fact sheet](#) to educate patients and staff.
  - Refer people with signs of hepatitis A for medical evaluation and
  - Report these suspected cases to your [local health department](#) right away.
- **Remind staff and clients of the importance of handwashing** with soap and warm water after using the bathroom, and before preparing, serving, or eating food. Waterless hand sanitizers are not effective against hepatitis A virus. Post this multilingual [Wash Your Hands poster](#) in bathrooms and kitchens. FREE copies of the poster can be ordered from your [local health department](#).
- **Ensure routine and consistent [cleaning of bathrooms](#)** for staff and clients, using chlorine bleach with a ratio of 1 and 2/3 cup of bleach to one gallon of water. Due to the high bleach concentration of this mix, rinse surfaces with water after 1 minute of contact time and wear gloves while cleaning. Visit San Diego County's [Hepatitis A webpage](#) for additional information.
- **Contact your [local health department](#)** to learn whether your clients should be prioritized for hepatitis A vaccination.
- If your [local health department](#) determines that you have clients that should be prioritized for hepatitis A vaccination, vaccinate onsite if possible. If your facility is unable to vaccinate onsite,

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**make a strong referral for vaccination offsite.**

- For Medi-Cal patients (Fee for Service or Managed Care), hepatitis A vaccine given in a provider's office or network pharmacy is covered without prior authorization. Call the Plan's member services number (on the back of the patient's Medi-Cal ID card) to locate a network pharmacy and confirm availability of the vaccine in the pharmacy.
- Medi-Cal provides coverage for transportation for medical care, including vaccination. For information, contact the client's Medi-Cal member services department or call 1-800-541-5555.
- Vaccine Finder (<https://vaccinefinder.org/>) can be used to help clients find a location nearby that stocks hepatitis A vaccine and accepts the client's insurance.
- Consult with your [local health department](#) to determine whether hepatitis A vaccine should also be offered to staff (including intake workers, food handlers, and custodians) or other clients.

Everyone can play a role in addressing this significant public health threat. Thank you for your help in preventing the spread of hepatitis A. For more information about preventing the spread of [hepatitis A](#) for your staff and clients, contact your [local health department](#) or visit the [CDC website](#).

Immunization Branch  
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