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**Jefferson County Health Department Reports First Measles Case in Jefferson County Since 2019**

**Hillsboro, Missouri-** Jefferson County Health Department (JCHD) has been notified of the county’s first positive measles case since 2019. To protect the confidentiality of the patient, no further information will be shared. Jefferson County Public Health Communicable Disease team has already begun case investigations regarding this case.

With cases reported across the country, and now in Jefferson County, JCHD recommends parents and guardians check their child’s vaccination records to make sure they have received the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine.

“It’s important that individuals know their vaccination status and get vaccinated,” states Steve Sikes, Executive Director at Jefferson County Health Department. “Vaccination is key to preventing the spread of measles and safeguarding public health.”

JCHD provides MMR vaccine at their Hillsboro and Arnold offices. Most health insurance plans cover vaccines. For those without insurance, the Vaccines for Children Program, funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), provides free vaccines to children who qualify.

To be fully immunized, children are recommended to receive two doses of the MMR vaccine, with the first dose between ages 12-15 months and the second dose between ages 4-6 years old. The MMR vaccine is extremely effective, giving those vaccinated with just one dose 93% protection against measles infection. Both doses of the vaccine provide individuals with a 97% protection rate throughout their lifetime.

Measles is a highly contagious and serious disease, especially serious for children under age five and those who are immunocompromised. Common symptoms include a rash that starts as flat red spots on the head and spreads to other parts of the body, high fever, cough, runny nose, red and watery eyes, and tiny white spots inside the mouth. But in some instances, individuals with measles will develop brain infection, which can lead to brain damage, and for some, the disease is fatal even with the best care.

The virus spreads through coughing and sneezing and can live for up to two hours in an airspace after an infected person leaves an area. A person can spread measles without knowing they are infected. If not treated, complications can grow in severity.

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**About the Jefferson County Health Department**

Jefferson County Health Department offers vital records, mobile dental and nursing services, in-house lab work and clinical visits, restaurant inspections, patient resource assistance, training, and emergency preparedness and response. They have offices in Hillsboro and Arnold, MO. Visit jeffcohealth.org for more information.