

June 30, 2010

**TO: County AOD Administrator and AOD Treatment Providers**

**FR: Renée Zito, LMSW, CASAC, Director, California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs (ADP); Elinore McCance-Katz, MD, PhD, ADP State Medical Director and Team**

**RE: Whooping Cough (Pertussis) is Now an Epidemic in California**

\*\*\*\*\*

On June 23, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) issued a warning about whooping cough (pertussis): “Whooping cough is now an epidemic in California...” and “... children should be vaccinated against the disease and parents, family members, and caregivers of infants need a booster shot” [See: <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/Pages/NR10-041.aspx>]. This current epidemic of whooping cough brings added responsibility for all AOD program directors and staff to be knowledgeable about whooping cough immunization and actions to assist clients to seek medical evaluation and treatment when necessary.

Whooping cough is a highly contagious disease and unimmunized or under-immunized infants are particularly at risk. Critical information for you to share with your AOD treatment and recovery services providers appears below.

Sharing information, staying up-to-date on whooping cough-related recommendations from the CDPH, and maintaining communication with your local health department are important activities to conduct during this serious epidemic. Links to in-depth public health information on whooping cough are included here also. Your actions will help keep clients and the AOD workforce healthy during this epidemic.

**1. Who is recommended to receive the vaccination against whooping cough? Per the CDPH:**

- Pertussis vaccine begins at two months of age, but infants are not completely protected until the series of three shots is finished at six months of age;
- Pregnant women should be vaccinated and can get the whooping cough vaccine before pregnancy, during pregnancy or after giving birth;
- Fathers should and can be vaccinated at any time;
- Others who have contact with infants, including family members, and healthcare workers, should be vaccinated;
- Childcare workers should also be vaccinated.

## **2. How can whooping cough be prevented?**

The best way to prevent whooping cough is to get immunized. You can also take everyday actions to stay healthy:

- Parents can also help protect their very young infants by minimizing exposure (close contact) with persons who have cold symptoms or cough illness. Coughing people of any age, including parents, siblings and grandparents can have pertussis. When a person has cold symptoms or cough illness, they need to stay away from young infants as much as possible.

## **3. AOD Program action:**

- Ensure that all infants of women, men, and in families in your programs are enrolled in pediatric health care and have started and received their immunizations against whooping cough;
- Ensure that each pregnant woman is enrolled in prenatal care and is evaluated for immunization by her care provider;
- Ensure that AOD and contracted and/or outside child care staff and other staff having contact with infants and children have been vaccinated against whooping cough;
- Ensure that children residing in programs are enrolled in pediatric care and are evaluated for immunization by their care provider;
- Ensure that information on whooping cough is posted in your program. You can obtain brochures, posters and more information at:  
<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/Pertussis.aspx>
- Ensure that staff and clients are knowledgeable about whooping cough;
- If you have any questions about whooping cough, contact your local health department or healthcare provider. Local health department contact information is available through the following link:  
<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/immunize/Pages/CaliforniaLocalHealthDepartments.aspx>

## **4. What level of preparedness should be in place in an AOD program to respond to an epidemic like this one we are experiencing with whooping cough?**

Programs can do much to be prepared for disease epidemics including:

- Develop a committee or point person in your program who will provide leadership for disease prevention, education and to ensure clients health needs are addressed;
- Identify local and State health department authorities and stay in touch with them about vaccination and infection control procedures and availability and location of vaccination sites in your community;
- Identify your local health care facilities where clients can go for vaccinations and for health care if they become ill;
- Discuss how your program is addressing disease prevention and preparedness; and
- Take steps to ensure the health of your clients and your workforce.

**Additional Resources Include:**

The California Department of Public Health website on whooping cough:  
<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/Pertussis.aspx>

The CDPH June 23, 2010 press release on whooping cough:  
<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/Pages/NR10-041.aspx>

Center for Disease Control and Prevention webpage on whooping cough is:  
[http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/pertussis\\_t.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/pertussis_t.htm)

Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs  
<http://www.adp.ca.gov>