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## **State Health Officials Continue Investigation and Control of Statewide Measles Outbreak**

RALEIGH – North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services public health officials and staff from local health departments are now investigating 19 cases of measles in Stokes, Orange and Polk counties as part of an outbreak that was first reported in mid-April. Since the outbreak began, state and local public health authorities have notified more than 1,000 people in Stokes, Forsyth, Guilford, Orange, Polk and Chatham counties who may have been exposed to the disease.

Most of the cases are associated with people who live in or have visited the Prabhupada Village in Stokes County. As part of the investigation, public health investigators are identifying additional possible exposures based on information from current cases. Investigators have now determined that at least two confirmed cases attended the Shakori Hills GrassRoots Festival in Chatham County Friday evening April 19 through Sunday April 21 while infectious and before becoming ill.

“Most of the persons who became infected with measles were individuals both inside and outside this community were not vaccinated,” said Scott Lenhart, Stokes County Health Director. “This is an important reminder that anyone who has not been protected by immunization is highly susceptible to measles.”

Stokes County health officials and state public health officials are working closely with the Prabhupada Village community to avoid further spread of illness. Lenhart recommends that any individuals, especially those who are not vaccinated, avoid visiting the Prabhupada Village community until the outbreak is over. As an additional precaution, Stokes County health officials are advising that individuals who are not vaccinated should avoid any highly populated areas in Stokes County during the outbreak.

“Measles is an extremely infectious disease and spreads very quickly,” said Dr. Laura Gerald, State Health Director. “If you suspect you may be sick with measles, please call your healthcare provider before leaving home to avoid spreading the illness to people in doctors’ office or clinic waiting areas or in emergency departments.”

Measles is a highly contagious illness and unvaccinated populations are at highest risk of becoming sick when exposed to the measles virus. It can be spread through coughing, sneezing and contact with secretions from the nose, mouth and throat of an infected person. Initial symptoms of this illness may include a fever over 101 F degrees, runny nose, watery red eyes and a cough. After a few days, a rash will begin to appear on the face and spread over the entire body. Persons with measles are considered infectious four days before and four days after the rash appears.

Persons exposed to the measles virus who have not been vaccinated or have not had measles earlier in life are required to stay home for a period of time specified by public health officials because they can begin to pass the infection to others before they show signs of illness.

Measles can be prevented by the combination MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccine. It is important for all individuals 12 months of age and older to get vaccinated.

Public health officials recommend immunization within 72 hours of exposure for those individuals who have not already been vaccinated to protect against developing the disease.

More information about measles is available at:  
<http://epi.publichealth.nc.gov/cd/diseases/rubeola.html>

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