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CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH ANNOUNCES STATE WILL REQUIRE MANDATORY REPORTING OF SEVERE MRSA CASES

SACRAMENTO – Dr. Mark Horton, director of the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), announced today that California will require severe cases of staph infections, including methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), be added to the list of diseases reported to local health departments in the state.

“Our goal is to prevent severe staph infections, including MRSA, to the greatest extent possible,” said Horton. “By making severe cases of staph infections a reportable disease in California, we will be able to better understand the incidence these infections in California and who is at greatest risk.”

Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus Aureus* (MRSA) is a type of staph infection that is resistant to certain antibiotics. Until recently, most MRSA infections occurred among hospitalized patients. However, newer, more virulent strains of MRSA have emerged in the community, causing community-associated MRSA infections.

The new reporting requirement mandates that health care providers report all cases of severe staph infections, including MRSA, to their local health department, which will report the infections to the state. Severe cases are those in which there is an infection in a previously healthy person that results in death or admission to a hospital intensive care unit.

“Gaining a better picture of the incidence of severe cases of staph infections in California will enable us to develop more robust prevention and control strategies,” Horton said.

MRSA causes boils, abscesses, and other soft tissue infections and is spread through direct contact with people or contact with MRSA contaminated surfaces or items. MRSA spreads more quickly in crowded areas such as locker rooms, dormitory rooms, or other crowded living conditions, particularly when skin-to-skin contact is likely.

Most skin infections, including MRSA, can be easily treated if identified in a timely manner. Maintaining good hand hygiene by washing hands with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer is the single most important measure that can be taken to prevent the spread of skin infections, including MRSA.

CDPH has the authority to require certain infectious diseases be reported by healthcare providers to local health departments on an as needed basis to protect the health of the people

of the state. The amendment to add severe staph infections became effective upon filing with the Secretary of State and printed in the California Code of Regulations.

Additional information about MRSA, including information for parents, schools, athletic departments and health care providers is available at www.cdph.ca.gov

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