



**Commonwealth of Kentucky  
Cabinet for Health and Family Services**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Public Health Reports Confirmed Case of Measles in  
Barren River District**

*Case Is Not Linked to Washington Outbreak*

**FRANKFORT, Ky.** (Feb. 15, 2019) – A case of measles has been confirmed in a young child living in the region served by the Barren River District Health Department. The child, who is unvaccinated, recently traveled out of the country to an area where measles is endemic, the Kentucky Department for Public Health (DPH) reports. The case is not linked to an ongoing measles outbreak in the state of Washington or other cases of measles in the U.S.

DPH, the Barren River District Health Department, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are collaborating in the investigation and have confirmed the child did not become infectious until returning to Kentucky. Public exposure is believed to be very limited and public health officials are in the process of notifying individuals who came into contact with the child during the infectious period.

“Measles is a highly contagious illness so it is extremely important that close contacts are notified,” said DPH Commissioner Dr. Jeff Howard. “We are working diligently, along with our local health department and CDC colleagues, to make sure contacts are aware of this potential case, are getting any necessary medical care and aren’t spreading the

illness to others. We cannot stress enough the importance of vaccination. Measles, among many other vaccine-preventable diseases, is an extremely dangerous illness, especially for small children.”

Measles is a serious, highly contagious respiratory illness caused by the rubeola virus. It is the most deadly of all childhood rash/fever illnesses, but is preventable with vaccine. Symptoms include fever, cough, runny nose, red eyes for a few days followed by rash. Complications from measles, which can range from an ear infection to encephalitis, are of great concern to public health practitioners.

While DPH reported that measles cases are extremely rare in the state of Kentucky, there have been cases acquired in countries where measles is still common. Anyone experiencing signs and symptoms of measles is encouraged to contact their health care provider.

Measles remains rare in the United States, where most people are vaccinated against the disease. Most of the reported U.S. cases have occurred in individuals exposed to measles abroad or through someone from abroad visiting the United States. Most have occurred in unvaccinated or under-vaccinated individuals, such as the case with the ongoing outbreak in the state of Washington.

Measles vaccination is routinely given to children at 12-15 months of age and again at 4-6 years of age. **Anyone with questions about measles immunity or the measles vaccine should contact their primary care provider.**

Patients who suspect they may have measles should call ahead before visiting a clinic or hospital. The healthcare provider should provide instructions for entering the facility without exposing others in the facility.

MMR or measles vaccine administered within 72 hours of initial measles exposure may provide some protection.

*The Cabinet for Health and Family Services is home to most of the state's human services and healthcare programs, including the Department for Medicaid Services, the Department for Community Based Services the Department for Public Health, the Department for Aging and Independent Living and the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities. CHFS is one of the largest agencies in state government, with nearly 8,000 full- and part-time employees located across the Commonwealth focused on improving the lives and health of Kentuckians.*