



Date: August 28, 2012

To: Waukesha County School Principals, School Nurses, and Personnel

From: Peter W. Schuler, Health Officer for Waukesha County

Re: **Changes in Pertussis Follow-Up for the 2012-13 School Year**

Waukesha County began to see an increase in reported cases of pertussis in October 2011. Pertussis cases reached outbreak level and the outbreak is currently ongoing. In a non-outbreak year, Waukesha County has an average of 27 cases of pertussis. In 2011, there were **111** cases of pertussis, most of them in the last quarter of the year. From January to July 2012, there were **390** cases. Pertussis is occurring throughout Waukesha County and in most counties in the State of Wisconsin.

It is anticipated that the high incidence of pertussis will continue into the 2012-2013 school year. In order to manage the outbreak effectively with limited resources, the Waukesha County Public Health Division (WCPHD) needs to prioritize pertussis case and contact investigations. This memo summarizes the WCPHD pertussis prioritization plan for 2012-2013, and makes recommendations regarding the role of schools in managing pertussis.

Pertussis Transmission

Pertussis is usually spread by *repeated indoor face-to-face or close contact for an hour or more* with someone who is sick with the disease. Examples of persons who are likely to catch pertussis are people in the same household, close friends and people in a regular carpool. These persons are considered close contacts and are at higher risk of becoming ill. It is recommended that close contacts take antibiotics to prevent pertussis, even if fully immunized.

Some people are at greater risk for *serious illness* from pertussis and are recommended to take preventative antibiotics if they are exposed. People at greater risk of *serious illness* are:

- **Infants under one year of age; infants are more likely to become seriously ill, need hospitalization and are more likely to die from pertussis**
- Pregnant women who are in their 3rd trimester (newborn infant is at high risk of serious illness)
- Persons who are immunocompromised, have chronic lung disease (including asthma), or have neuromuscular diseases that make it difficult to swallow

WCPHD Pertussis Prioritization Plan will include:

- Case Management of laboratory confirmed cases only
- School personnel will be notified about confirmed cases by WCPHD
- Contact investigation and control measures focusing on
 - household contacts
 - close contacts with an emphasis on those who are at high risk for serious disease (see above)
 - clusters of cases within a classroom or group (3 or more cases within a group, whose onset of illness occurs within a 21 day period)
 - contacts to a pertussis case in special settings e.g. day care centers, special needs classrooms
- A School Pertussis notification template regarding possible exposure will be provided to schools and other groups to distribute

Pertussis Follow-up for Schools will include:

- Report pertussis cases to WCPHD or the local health department where student or staff resides
- Assist with the identification and notification of close contacts and high risk contacts as requested by WCPHD
- Schools may choose to notify classroom contacts and other school groups of possible exposures. Do not send the notice until the diagnosis verified by WCPHD. Use the School Pertussis template notification and the State of Wisconsin Disease Fact Sheet on Pertussis. The template is available at www.waukeshacounty.gov/schools
- Refer for medical evaluation students and staff who have pertussis-like symptoms as described below:
 - A cough that is lasting more than a week
 - A long series of coughing that makes it difficult to catch one's breath (coughing fits)
 - Coughing fits that are followed by a whooping noise or vomiting
- Students and staff with confirmed pertussis should be restricted from school until they have completed 5 days of antibiotics
- Students and staff suspected of having pertussis should be restricted from school until they have either a negative test or have completed 5 days of antibiotics
- Encourage one Tdap vaccine for adolescents age 11-12 and for adults

The follow-up plan described above may be modified depending on the situation. The WCPHD will expand the investigation and control measures as necessary depending on the circumstances.

The WCPHD is committed to working with schools, parents, and the community to control the spread of pertussis. School personnel are encouraged to call the WCPHD at 262-896-8430 if there are questions or to discuss individual situations.