



**CABINET FOR HEALTH AND FAMILY SERVICES
DEPARTMENT FOR PUBLIC HEALTH**

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Adam M. Meier
Secretary

Jeffrey D. Howard, Jr., MD
Commissioner

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Dear Hospital CMOs, ED Directors, ED Nurses, IPCs & Pharmacists:

As you may be aware, Kentucky has been experiencing a hepatitis A virus (HAV) outbreak since November 2017. Because of the risk factors associated with the spread of this disease, you are likely to encounter those at risk for HAV in your emergency departments. The risk factors for HAV in this outbreak are primarily drug use (injection and non-injection) and homelessness. Emergency departments provide a vital opportunity for partnership between private hospital systems and the state public health department to offer preventative medical services to citizens of the Commonwealth. The hepatitis A vaccine is very effective and the best way to prevent further spread of this disease.

Beyond the need for continued hepatitis A vaccination, this population is also at risk for poor outcomes and death from vaccine-preventable liver diseases. Because of these issues, vaccination against hepatitis A and B is an ongoing standard of care for people with these risk factors.

I am asking your help to reach this at-risk population and end this epidemic in our Commonwealth. In order to accomplish this, please consider a sustained vaccination effort to protect the at-risk population in the future. To aid this endeavor, I am offering additional direct assistance from the Kentucky Department for Public Health (KDPH) in several ways:

1. Your facility is eligible to enroll in a vaccine supply program, called the 317 program (thank you to those EDs that are already participating!). Through this program, KDPH can provide hepatitis A and B vaccines for uninsured and underinsured adults in your ED at no cost to you. This allows at-risk persons who present at your facility to be vaccinated during their ED visit, after screening for risk factors and insurance status. Important information involving standing orders, storage and handling, and vaccine information regarding HAV can be found in the following links below.

Sample standing orders for administering hepatitis A vaccine to adults

- <http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p3077.pdf>

Storage and Handling

- <http://www.immunize.org/handouts/vaccine-storage-handling.asp>

Vaccine Information Statements

- <http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p2027.pdf>

For more information, please call the KDPH Immunization Program at 502-564-4478 and ask to speak with someone about enrolling in the 317 program.

2. If your electronic medical record (EMR) is not connected to the Kentucky Health Information Exchange (KHIE), your facility can be granted access to the Kentucky Immunization Registry (KYIR) in order to determine the vaccination status of patients while in the ED. KYIR is a web-based, easy-to use system that houses Kentucky residents' individual immunization histories statewide. If you would like access to KYIR, please contact the KYIR Helpdesk to get enrolled at: KYIRHelpdesk@ky.gov. If your EMR is live with KHIE, the vaccinations your hospital enters into the EMR automatically transfer over to the immunization registry.

I encourage you to take advantage of one or both of these opportunities as we work together to end this outbreak and prevent future outbreaks. If you have identified barriers to implementing any of these opportunities, please let us know so that we can assist you. In addition, my team would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to address any obstacles that are preventing vaccination of those at risk for HAV and HBV infection in your ED.

I would also like to thank the emergency departments that have already implemented this protocol. With your help, we can decrease the number of new HAV cases in our state. Please contact our Immunization team at 502-564-4478 if you have questions or need further information. Thank you for your assistance in addressing this public health issue for the citizens of the Commonwealth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "J. Howard". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jeffrey D. Howard, Jr., M.D.