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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department Prepares for Potential Measles Cases

With multiple measles outbreaks occurring nationwide and Michigan confirming its first case of 2025 this past weekend, the Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department is taking proactive steps to prepare for potential cases in Benzie and Leelanau Counties.

“Approximately 81%-83% of school-aged children in Benzie and Leelanau Counties are vaccinated against measles,” said Dan Thorell, Health Officer at the Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department. “That still leaves around 17%-19% vulnerable to infection if measles reaches our community.”

Measles is one of the most contagious diseases, spreading through airborne droplets that can linger for up to two hours after an infected person has left a room. 9 out of 10 unvaccinated individuals exposed to the virus will become infected.

Symptoms typically appear 7 to 14 days after exposure but can take up to 21 days to develop. Early symptoms include a high fever, runny nose, cough, red, watery eyes, and conjunctivitis (pink eye). Within 2 to 3 days, small white spots (Koplik spots) may appear inside the mouth. By days 3 to 5, a red, blotchy rash emerges—starting on the face before spreading to the trunk, arms, and legs. Those infected are contagious 4 days before and 4 days after the rash appears. Measles can lead to severe complications.

As of Friday, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) had reported 301 measles cases across 15 states, with 50 hospitalizations and 2 deaths. About 1 in 20 children with measles develop pneumonia, while 1 in 1,000 experience encephalitis—brain swelling that can cause seizures, hearing loss, disability, or death. More than 75% of cases have occurred in children under 19, with 95% affecting those who were unvaccinated or whose vaccination status was unknown.

Vaccination remains the best protection. A single dose of the measles vaccine (MMR) is 93% effective at preventing infection, while two doses increase protection to 97%. The vaccine, in use since the early 1960s, has been proven safe and effective through millions of doses administered worldwide. The CDC recommends the first dose at 12-15 months of age and the second at 4-6 years.

To prepare for potential cases, the Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department is working with school administrators to provide information on measles and prevention strategies. Additionally, the department will host measles vaccination clinics with after-school hours on 4/7/25 at our Leelanau County office and 4/8/25 at our Benzie County office, making it easier for parents to get their children vaccinated. The measles vaccine is also available through other local health departments and through your physician.

“I estimate there are about 300-350 school-aged children in Benzie and Leelanau Counties County who are not fully vaccinated,” noted Michelle Klein, Director of Personal Health at the Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department. “I’ve seen how miserable measles can make you, and I hope to see as many of those kids protected as possible.”

For more information about measles, visit our [BLDHD website](#) or [the CDC](#). To schedule an MMR vaccine appointment, call **231-882-4409 ext 3**.

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