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For Immediate Release

To: Local Media
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PERTUSSIS

Kingsford, Michigan – Pertussis (whooping cough) has been confirmed in two Dickinson County residents. Unfortunately, it can be up to three weeks between the time someone is infected with pertussis and the time they actually develop symptoms, so new cases may continue to arise over the coming weeks. Parents are encouraged to make sure that everyone in their family is up to date on immunizations. Most medical providers and all health department offices have vaccine on hand.

Health Department Medical Director Teresa Frankovich, M.D. notes that children normally receive a DTaP vaccine, providing protection against pertussis, at 2, 4, 6 and 12-15 months of age, and a booster dose at 4-6 years of age. “Some parents may not realize that another booster dose (called Tdap), is now needed for children at 11 years of age. In fact, documentation of a Tdap booster is now required for children entering 6th grade and for older children transferring between schools. This one-time booster is also recommended for adults who have not had a pertussis vaccine since early childhood.” Frankovich said. “A recent increase in pertussis has been seen in the U.P. and nationally.”

Pertussis usually begins with mild upper respiratory symptoms, such as runny nose and mild cough, with little or no fever. It then progresses to a more severe cough, with spasms of coughing which may cause vomiting. Some, but not all individuals will actually make a whooping sound as they take a breath between coughing spasms. This is how pertussis came to be called “whooping cough.” Antibiotics are used to help decrease contagiousness in people with pertussis and can be used to help prevent infection in close contacts, but they do not “cure” the illness and symptoms may last for 6-10 weeks. Complications of pertussis in older children and adults may include pneumonia and rib fractures. Infants under 6 months of age are most at risk for severe disease due to pertussis, with possible complications including pneumonia, seizures and rarely, death.

Because of the current cases, Dr. Frankovich reminds parents, “The best way to protect your family is to make sure that everyone in the household is up-to-date on their pertussis vaccinations. It is also important to have your child seen by a healthcare provider, if he is sick with pertussis-like symptoms, before sending him to school.”

Individuals should call their healthcare provider or the health department (774-1868 or 265-9913), to see if they or their children are due for a pertussis vaccine or to make an appointment to be vaccinated.

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