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FROM: **Alexander Brzezny, MD, MPH**
Grant County Health Officer

TO: Staff and Parents/Guardians

There are cases of Chickenpox in some of our Grant County schools and likely other settings in the community. The schools with known exposures are Park Orchard, Longview and North Elementary. The potential for spread to further schools is high. Chickenpox is a vaccine-preventable disease that can have serious complications (including death), especially for those who are immune compromised or have health conditions. Infection during pregnancy can cause serious complications for the unborn child.

Chickenpox is very contagious. After being exposed, it takes 10 to 21 days to develop the symptoms, including a rash that forms blisters and then scabs. A fever may or may not also be present. Chickenpox is contagious for 2 days before the rash even shows up. Children should not return to school or childcare until all blisters have scabbed over; this can take several days to weeks. They should be free of fever before returning to school. Some children who have had only one dose of vaccine may still get a rash when exposed to chickenpox; their illness is shorter and milder, but they can still infect others.

The Grant County Health District strongly recommends that all children, students, and staff who have not had the chicken pox and have not been vaccinated with 2 doses of varicella vaccine get vaccinated immediately. Getting vaccinated within 5 days of exposure can prevent the chickenpox.

Pregnant women who are not immune and get exposed, certain exposed newborn infants and exposed persons with weakened immune systems should see their healthcare provider right away about possible treatment.

Parents, school staff, and childcare staff can their provider or our office at 766-7960 and ask to speak with a public health nurse if they have questions. You can ask your provider to check your immunity through lab work if you are unsure of your vaccination status.

Evidence of Immunity

- Documentation of age-appropriate varicella vaccination:
 - Age 12 months - 3 years: 1 dose
 - School age, adolescents and adults: 2 doses
- Lab evidence of immunity or disease
- Birth in the United States before 1980 excluding health care personnel, pregnant women and immunocompromised persons.
- Diagnosis or verification of a history of varicella or herpes zoster by a healthcare provider

Important: Students and staff exposed to chickenpox WILL LIKELY be excluded from school or childcare if immunity is not documented or obtained through vaccination with 2 doses within five days of exposure. Exclusion may last for 12 calendar days or longer.

