Cantwell, Sec. Selecky Call on CDC Investigators to Help Stem WA Whooping Cough Epidemic

Local News

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U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA) joined Washington State Department of Health (DOH) Secretary Mary Selecky in

Cantwell sent a letter today to the CDC requesting that the Epi-Aid team of disease investigators be sent to help state health officials. An Epi-Aid team would collaborate with Washington state health officials to intensify the response to the disease. They would also work to identify why the outbreak of whooping cough has turned into an epidemic. With this information, DOH could focus vaccination programs, public education, and other resources more efficiently and effectively to fight back against the epidemic.

“A swift response is critical to stem this outbreak and save lives,” said Cantwell. “With dozens of r

On April 3, 2012, Selecky declared a statewide whooping cough epidemic. And yesterday Governor Chris Gregoire an

"We're seeing an unprecedented number of whooping cough cases this year, and we want help tracking and respondi

On Tuesday, the DOH reported that there have been 1,132 cases of whooping cough since January 1, 2012 – nearly 10 times the number of reported cases (117) in 2011 during that same period of time and dozens more cases than the previous week. Nearly three-quarters (819 of 1,132) of all cases this year have occurred in Snohomish, Skagit, Pierce, King, and Clark counties. Twelve counties have reported no whopping cough cases. If the epidemic continues at its current rate, DOH officials estimate that 2012 will contain the highest levels of whooping cough cases in more than 60 years. For more information, see the latest DOH weekly update on the whooping cough epidemic here.In fiscal year 2011, the CDC responded to 84 requests for Epi-Aid teams, which were sent to 39 states, three U.S. territories, and 14 foreign countries. In 2011, Epi-Aid investigators conducted 293 field investigations around the world. Examples of past Epi-Aid investigations include a risk assessment for rabies following exposure to a bat on an airplane in Wisconsin last August and chlorine gas exposure at a poultry processing plant in Arkansas last June. Epi-Aid investigators played key roles in CDC’s response to the 2009 H1N1 influenza pandemic and the Haiti cholera epidemic after the January 2010 earthquake. Funding for the new doses of vaccines announced yesterday – and for a large part of the Epi-Aid program – comes from the federal Prevention and Public Health Fund. Cantwell supported the fund’s creation in 2009.A common cause of the illness among children is adults who unknowingly have whooping cough and pass it on. Adults with whooping cough often display mild symptoms that appear to be a cold or the flu and don’t realize the severity of their illness. Among children, whooping cough can be lethal. In 2011, a mother in Snohomish County, Chelsey Charles, lost her 27-day old infant, Kaliah, after the baby came down with whooping cough. More than 80 percent of cases reported so far this

year have been among people ages 18 and younger.For additional information about whooping cough, please visit the CDC’s website.