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News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Clark County Health District Implements Hepatitis A Initiative

(Las Vegas, Nev. – April 20, 1999) – Case reports of hepatitis A disease have increased in Clark County over the past several years. In 1997 the rate was 34 cases per 100,000 population, which is over three times the national average. To address this public health problem the Clark County Health District (CCHD) is implementing a Hepatitis A Vaccine Program for children between the ages of 2 through 5.

This effort is supported by the Centers for Disease Control and vaccine for the program is provided through a grant by the Vaccine for Children Program. CCHD public health nurses are administering the vaccine in child care facilities located in zip codes identified as high risk (over 20 cases per 100,000 population). CCHD has invited 139 child care facilities to participate in the Hepatitis A Vaccine Program and has scheduled 55 immunization clinics to date. In addition to these clinics, the vaccination is available free of charge to children ages 2 through 5 at all health district locations that provide immunizations.

Hepatitis A is a serious liver disease caused by the hepatitis A virus. According to Dr. Rose Bell, the Clark County Health District epidemiologist, signs and symptoms

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include nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, jaundice, fatigue, abdominal pain and diarrhea. Hepatitis A virus is spread from person to person through putting something in the mouth that has been contaminated with infected feces or by fecal contamination of food and water. The highest rates of infection occur in children who often have mild or no symptoms; however children commonly transmit hepatitis A to adults who can become quite ill.

Proper hand washing with soap and water after using the bathroom or changing diapers and the cleansing of changing tables will prevent transmission, however, cases of hepatitis A continue to occur. The best way to protect against hepatitis A is immunization. The vaccine is safe and effective, and was licensed in the United States in 1995. Hepatitis A vaccine is a two dose series that can be initiated at age two. For more information contact the CCHD Office of Epidemiology at 383-1378.

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