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News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Clark County Health District Modifies Current Foodhandler Process

(Las Vegas, Nev. – November 5, 1999) – The Clark County Health District will implement modifications to its current procedure for obtaining foodhandler cards to include the implementation of hepatitis A immunizations in lieu of tuberculosis (TB) skin testing beginning November 15, 1999. The modification also includes provisions to extend the interval of food handler card renewal from two to three years and increase fees from \$10 to \$30.

Under the current process 140,000 applicants a year access foodhandler card training which requires TB skin testing. Applicants then must "self-read" the test placing the responsibility upon the applicant to contact the Health District for further diagnosis if they are reactive to the TB skin test. Very few cases of TB have been identified through this program. According to Dr. Kwalick, chief health officer for the District, "After analyzing the situation we came to the conclusion that there are more effective avenues we can explore to reduce community disease and protect individuals visiting our community."

(more)

Upon the suspension of TB skin testing for foodhandlers each new or renewing applicant will be administered the hepatitis A vaccination. Although the hepatitis A immunization is a two-shot series, current medical journals and authorities agree that almost 95 percent protection can be obtained with the initial inoculation. The second hepatitis A shot will be administered when an applicant returns to renew their food handler card, granting full immunity to the disease.

Hepatitis A is a serious liver disease that is transmitted through fecal contamination of food or other objects placed in the mouth. Case reports 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.

The Health District will continue to administer the TB skin test for all other professions which are required by virtue of their licensure or involvement in community services to have their skin test given and read (i.e., adult and child care attendants, school teachers, etc.).

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