



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
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THE PUBLIC HEALTH NURSING RESPONSE TO MEASLES

The nursing staff at Fairbanks Public Health Center didn't miss a beat on June 9, 2015 when they learned that a Fairbanks resident who recently traveled abroad had been diagnosed with a confirmed case of measles. Although measles had not made an appearance in Alaska for almost fifteen years, Fairbanks Public Health Nurses were prepared to act immediately by meeting with the affected resident, close contacts, and community to address this public health threat.

Within 90 minutes of receiving news of the confirmed case, two Public Health Nurses from the Fairbanks Public Health Center contacted the affected individual and arrived at their residence. The nurses were welcomed into the home, where they assessed the family's current health status, addressed related needs such as food supply during their upcoming period of confinement, and provided education on measles, including comfort measures for the affected family member.

Well before information concerning the first Fairbanks measles case of the century hit the local news, the Fairbanks Public Health center staff had already begun a process of collaboration that grew to include more than 25 local and statewide partners. The spirit of cooperation and information sharing meant timely health care services, education, and linkages to related services. At the same time, appointments for routine Public Health Nursing services unrelated to measles continued with minimal interruption.

"As news began to circulate about measles in the Fairbanks community, we experienced a significant increase in phone calls from local residents," stated Clinic Nurse Manager Laura Kolasa. "Some questioned whether they had been in proximity to the infected person in public areas such as shopping centers, when a person can be infectious but symptom free. Others wanted to verify their immunization records or schedule an immunization appointment. Potentially infectious clients were accommodated with curbside appointments at the Public Health Center, where they were able to consult with and receive services from a Public Health Nurse without leaving their car."

During the following weeks, through phone calls and home visits, Fairbanks Public Health Nurses monitored close contacts of the infected individual for symptoms of measles. The infectious period ended on July 19th, with no further cases diagnosed locally or statewide.

"The nursing process was followed every step of the way, at the individual, community, and systems level," stated Regional Nurse Manager Elizabeth Burton. "We mobilized highly qualified Public Health Nurses to work individually with the affected person, family, and other close contacts. At the community level, our nurses responded with consistent messaging as they educated Fairbanks residents about signs, symptoms, and the MMR (Measles, Mumps, and Rubella) vaccine. At the systems level, Public Health

Nurses followed policies and procedures already in place for situations such as this. Thanks to these efforts, and the collaborative efforts of partners statewide, Fairbanks residents had the information they needed to make informed health care decisions for themselves and their loved ones. Local residents know the Fairbanks Public Health Nurses remain a valued and trusted community resource, as demonstrated by their actions during this recent public health response.”

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