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Maricopa County Sheriff’s Office Addresses Hepatitis Outbreak with County Government Partners

Phoenix, AZ – The Maricopa County Sheriff’s Office in collaboration with partners from Maricopa County Correctional Health Services (CHS) and Maricopa County Department of Public Health (MCDPH) have recognized the societal impact of the recent Hepatitis A outbreak. In an effort to address this issue in a responsible manner, the collaboration with CHS and MCDPH, as well as the use of allocated funding and resources in vaccination procedures for the inmate population will work to mitigate this issue for the Maricopa County community at large.

Hepatitis A is a contagious liver infection caused by a virus that results in liver inflammation. The disease is treated with rest, fluids and adequate nutrition and can last several weeks to months. The average timeframe between exposure to the virus and the appearance of symptoms is 25-30 days.

Recognizing most inmates and community members are not offered these services, the Maricopa County Sheriff’s Office, in collaboration with County partners, have begun offering vaccine to every person booked into MCSO jail facilities who has not already been vaccinated.

“As of August 6th, 4,287 vaccinations have been administered out of our jail this year,” Sheriff Penzone said. “Our agency, along with our county partners take this outbreak very seriously to protect our community and keep those patients at the highest risk healthy and safe,” the Sheriff continued. “Due to a variety of significant societal impacts to our community, we must take necessary steps in order to prevent this from spreading further.”

"Maricopa County Correctional Health Services has worked closely with MCSO and the Maricopa County Department of Public Health to respond quickly and effectively to the outbreak of Hepatitis A in Maricopa County,” said Grant Philips, Medical Director, Maricopa County Correctional Health Services. “By focusing efforts on the jail population, we are vaccinating those patients who are at highest risk for acquiring the virus and for spreading the virus within the community when they leave jail. By vaccinating large numbers of individuals with the Hepatitis A vaccine, we hope to make a significant impact on decreasing the infection rate of our patient population and on members of the community in Maricopa County.”

“The hepatitis A vaccine is an excellent public health tool; just one dose is 95% effective in preventing disease when a person is exposed. We know from the experience of other communities with hepatitis A outbreaks, like San Diego, that vaccinating people at the highest risk of infection will stop the outbreak most efficiently,” said Dr. Rebecca Sunenshine, medical director for disease control at Maricopa County Department of Public Health. “We appreciate and thank all of our justice partners for working hand-in-hand with Public Health to keep our community healthy and safe.”