

Date: September 25, 2019

To: Adlai E. Stevenson High School Administration, Teachers, Staff, Parents/Guardians

From: Sana Ahmed, MD, Medical Epidemiologist

Re: Pertussis Recommendations from Lake County Health Department, Communicable Disease Program

Some students from Adlai E. Stevenson High School are ill with pertussis, also called “whooping cough”. This illness may spread to other students if preventative measures are not taken.

The Lake County Health Department (LCHD), Communicable Disease program has been working with the school to investigate cases of pertussis **and make sure that every close contact is identified and provided medication (prophylaxis) to prevent pertussis infection and spread.** Close contacts include all family members, best friends, boyfriends, girlfriends, close teammates, etc. These contacts, if not identified and treated, may spread pertussis to their family and friends.

Pertussis is caused by a bacterium that infects the mouth, nose, and throat and spreads through the air by coughing, sneezing, and talking. Symptoms are a dry cough which may present as coughing “fits” (mild or severe) **with little or no fever.** If severe enough, it can cause gagging or vomiting and can interrupt sleep. In between coughing fits the person appears well. Those with pertussis are **most contagious during the first 2 weeks after the cough starts. If infected with pertussis, infants, small children, and those who have weak immune systems may develop severe, life threatening illness.**

The most accurate test for diagnosing pertussis is a swab placed into the nose called a nasopharyngeal swab. **Antibiotics given early may minimize severe symptoms and prevent further spread of the disease.**

The Lake County Health Department (LCHD), Communicable Disease program recommends that you/your student be evaluated by a healthcare provider if they have a mild, worsening cough.

1. Parents/guardians, school personnel, teachers and/or coaches should watch for a continued cough.
2. Ill students should be sent to the school nurse. Students and staff with a cough should stay home until evaluated by a healthcare provider and/or appropriate treatment is provided.
3. Student or staff with symptoms of cough should be evaluated by a healthcare provider for pertussis testing and treatment. Please make sure to inform your doctor that pertussis has been reported at the school.
4. Please report all possible pertussis infections to the school nurse.
5. If you/your student was seen by a healthcare provider **AND** pertussis was suspected and tested for, **please remain home until results are available. If the test is positive for pertussis**



infection, return to school only after completion of the appropriate treatment (5 days or more).

6. The LCHD Communicable Disease program may call to obtain additional information if pertussis is suspected.

If you have questions, please contact the Communicable Diseases program at 847-377-8130.

Thank you for your cooperation,

Sana Shireen Ahmed, MD

Medical Epidemiologist