



Orange County News

Chapel Hill elementary school back to normal following whooping cough cases

By: Robert Richardson □

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CHAPEL HILL, N.C. (WNCN) - An outbreak of whooping cough at an elementary school led Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools administrators to send seven people home.

The Orange County Health Department confirmed cases of pertussis, commonly referred to as whooping cough, in six students and one teacher at Glenwood Elementary School. Tracy Sanders, the

CHCCS nurse coordinator, said Health Department staff notified the school system that a student had a confirmed case.

"The nurse at Glenwood was aware of that first thing one morning, and she was sending kids home that very same day that had any type of cough, especially if it was severe or had any kind of fever," Sanders said.

"The school nurse is working really closely with the health department and she's monitoring kids for coughs, particularly if they are a severe cough, and in close contact with that first child who's been diagnosed, and calling those parents and suggesting they follow up with their primary care physician."

Sanders said a second grader was the first to get sick and spread their cough to classmates, a teacher, and at least one other student on a school bus, and a teacher. Some of the sick children received treatment and have already returned to school with doctor's approval.

"We'd like parents to be more cautious about sending their children to school if they're having cold-like symptoms, running any type of fever or any type of cough," she said.

Most children are vaccinated against whooping cough before they start school and receive a vaccination booster when they are in middle school. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports pertussis

vaccines as 80-90% effective.

Some adult shots for tetanus and diphtheria also include a pertussis booster, in the Tdap and DTaP vaccines, but there are also vaccines that leave out the pertussis part. Medical professionals recommend these shots every decade.

Dr. Gregory Mosteller, an emergency physician who also serves as medical director for UNC Rex Urgent Cares, said whooping cough usually starts out with similar symptoms to a cold or viral illness, despite being a bacterial infection.

"It can look like a common cold until it doesn't," Mosteller said.

"You may get a runny nose, you may have some low-grade fever and some mild cough, and that's usually in the first couple of weeks so it can be mistook as just a regular cold," he said.

"Then after that you go into the coughing fits. You cough so violently that you get all of the air out of your lungs, and then you take a deep breath to get air back in your lungs and it makes that classic whooping sound."

Mosteller said that comes after a one or two week incubation period, and doctors hope to treat the illness with antibiotics within the first three weeks. He said most people's symptoms subside and are no longer contagious after about four weeks.

Infants are most susceptible to severe symptoms.

"It's most dangerous in young kids under 12 months, kids that aren't fully vaccinated. They can have a high mortality and morbidity, and a lot of those kids may need to be admitted to the hospital," Mosteller said.

Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools spokesperson Jeff Nash said things are back to normal Glenwood Elementary. Chapel Hill Mayor Pam Hemminger visited classes Thursday morning.

It's treatable with antibiotics.

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5/2/2019, 11:45AM

Seven cases of whooping cough appear at Glenwood Elementary

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A Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools bus drives toward Chapel Hill High School.

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Six students and one staff member at Glenwood Elementary School were diagnosed with whooping cough, a spokesperson for Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools said.

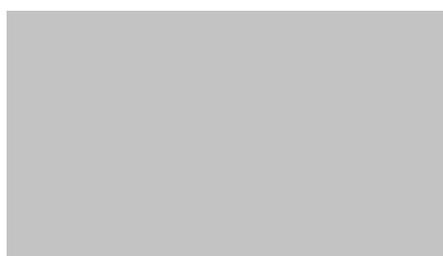
CHCCS spokesman Jeff Nash said the seven people infected, whose ages range from 8 to 24, are completing treatment, with some already well enough to return to school. Parents were notified of the outbreak with a letter from the Orange County Health Department.

Whooping cough, also known as pertussis, is a respiratory infection characterized by severe coughing spells that end in a whooping sound when the person breathes in. The Orange County Health Department said the first symptoms of whooping cough are similar to those of a common cold, including low-grade fever, runny nose and sneezing.

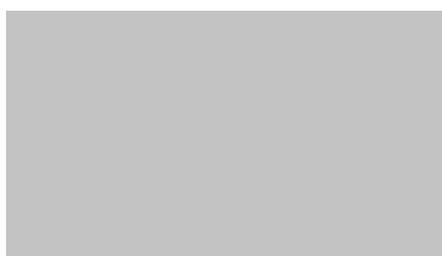
Infants and young children are most at risk for whooping cough. According to the letter sent to Glenwood parents, children are routinely immunized against whooping cough with the Tdap vaccine as an infant and again around age 4 or 5.

Those infected with whooping cough are treated with antibiotics.

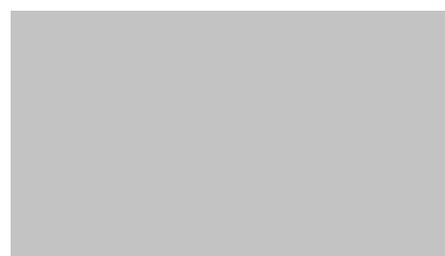
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[This is not the only whooping cough outbreak in CHCCS this year. In January, multiple cases were reported at Chapel Hill High School and East Chapel Hill High School.](#)

“In the seven years I’ve been here, it seems to crop up every couple years or so,” Nash said.

The number of cases in North Carolina increased from 300 in 2016 to 361 in 2017, the Orange County Health Department said.

The number of cases at Glenwood Elementary has remained steady at seven, Orange County communications manager Kristin Prelipp said. However, it’s too early to say the outbreak is over.

“Hopefully it dissipates quickly,” Nash said. “Until it does, we’ll continue working with the health department, making sure notices get to the right families.”

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3/26/2019, 11:01PM

Orange County residents and organizations discuss food security, homelessness



(Left to right) Dominika Gozdazinka, Ashley Heger and Allison De Marco make a list of the crowd's causes at the Carrboro Century Center. The goal of Monday's workshop was to educate community members how to make a difference in society.

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Local community organizations had one message on Monday: you are the answer.

Around 70 community members joined the Family Success Alliance, Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness and the Orange County Food Council for the Charity and Justice Community Workshop at the Carrboro Century Center on Monday.

Allison De Marco, outgoing chairperson of the leadership team of the OCPEH, said the event was meant to share the three hosting organizations' work with the community and raise awareness on the difference between charity and justice approaches to human need.

"Our organizations have been working with the county to really think about systems change and how we make, how we impact issues of poverty and homelessness and food insecurity in a more lasting and systematic way," she said.

She said providing shelter or food to people experiencing homelessness or food insecurity is an example of a charity response, while expanding affordable housing is an example of a justice response.

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Syndee Kraus, a Carrboro resident, said she came to the event because she was interested in the topic.

She said it can be difficult to know how to respond to human need.

"My husband and I give charitably and want to be actively involved, but you don't always know that what you're doing is helping," she said.

During the event, community members broke off into groups and were assigned topics like homelessness, unemployment, hunger and access to health care. They were subsequently asked to think of causes of the issue, as well as charity and justice responses.

When one community member asked if event attendees were allowed to switch groups after seeing his assignment, Ashley Heger, the coordinator of the OCFC, empowered him to stick with his original topic.

“Recognize that everyone has a level of expertise in some way to bring to this conversation,” she said.

De Marco said the shift in administration at the federal level has prompted greater attention to some of the issues addressed in the presentation.

“With the new administration at the federal level, we’ve seen a lot more both resistance and folks coming together to think about how we might address these issues,” she said. “There are a lot more conversations around race, racism, racial equity – across the country and in our community.”

Corey Root, a coordinator of the OCPEH, also facilitated the event. During the March 20 Chapel Hill Town Council meeting, Root said while 12 percent of the overall population in Orange County is Black, 46 percent of Orange County’s homeless population is Black.

She said this is consistent with statewide and nationwide data and is not an accident.

“We know that this is the result of direct, systemic racism and direct policies and practices in the area of housing for years and years and years going back decades,” she said. “So this is something, and the reason why we address racial equity along with all of our other goals to end homelessness.”

De Marco said it is difficult to envision what exactly a just society looks like.

“We’ve grown up in a society that perpetuates white supremacy systems and because of that we don’t really know what something else looks like potentially,” she said.

Root discussed alarming local trends in homelessness. [While the number of people experiencing homelessness has decreased by 15 percent nationwide and 24 percent statewide, it has increased by 13 percent in Orange County.](#)

Multiple facilitators suggested including the voices of those who have experienced the issues mentioned in the workshops, such as poverty or homelessness, in the discussion. De Marco said she hopes the workshop contributes to an ongoing dialogue.

“We want this to be a conversation, collaborative work within our community, across our towns and our county, both with the governments and with the community organizations and just really a way for us to have a conversation that continues,” she said.

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