



National Association of County & City Health Officials

The National Connection for Local Public Health

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Local Health Department Intervention Critical as Hepatitis Rates Continue to Rise

— CDC's Newly Released Viral Hepatitis Surveillance Report Shows  
Continued Rise in Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, and Hepatitis C Infections —

**Washington, DC, September 10, 2019** — Today, the [National Association of County and City Health Officials](#) (NACCHO), representing the nation's nearly 3,000 local governmental health departments, released the following statement in response to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) newly released *2017 Annual Viral Hepatitis Surveillance Report*. The report reveals that rates of acute hepatitis A (HAV), hepatitis B (HBV), and hepatitis C (HCV) infection in the U.S. continue to rise.

"The new report highlights the impact that viral hepatitis is having on communities across the country and underscores the need for investments in local health departments to implement and continue effective public health interventions to prevent and treat viral hepatitis," said Lori Tremmel Freeman, NACCHO's Chief Executive Officer. "These efforts, along with critical work of community, state and local partners, is needed to address the spread and the numerous factors that contribute to these rising rates. Failure to collaboratively act on these data will have significant consequences for our communities.

According to [the new report](#), cases of HAV jumped nearly 70 percent from 2016 to 2017, an increase largely attributable to person-to-person outbreaks among people experiencing homelessness and people who inject drugs. HBV rates among persons aged 40-49 years are the highest in 15 years, partly due to lack of vaccine protection in recommended populations, and

factors such as injection drug use and multiple sex partners compound the risk in older age groups. HCV infections have more than tripled since 2010 and the number of new cases is likely much higher but inestimable due to limited testing and underreporting. Large outbreaks of HCV have occurred predominantly among younger adults, primarily as a result of increasing injection drug use associated with America's ongoing opioid crisis.

As community providers of health education and services, local health departments are on the front lines and play a vital role in addressing hepatitis through vaccination; testing and treatment; linkage to care; surveillance and outbreak response; and elimination strategy planning. However, addressing and reversing these trends will require a collaborative effort among health providers at every level. Coordinated engagement among local, state, federal, and national stakeholders is needed to develop partnerships that increase access to vulnerable, hard-to-reach populations and successfully implement effective, community-based, prevention and treatment strategies, including:

- Expansion of hepatitis screening and linkage to care services;
- Increased access to vaccines, especially for recommended at-risk populations;
- Implementation of syringe services programs; and
- Eradication of treatment barriers for people living with hepatitis.

Together, these strategies will help decrease transmission of HAV, HBV, and HCV, and increase treatment availability, which will save lives and money and decrease the burden on the nation's health system.

NACCHO is committed to supporting local public health efforts and has developed several resources to build the capacity of local health departments to address viral hepatitis:

- [Webinar Series: Local Approaches to Preventing and Eliminating Hepatitis B](#)
- [Town Hall: Mobilizing Emergency Response in Hepatitis A Outbreaks](#)
- [NACCHO Exchange: Winter 2017 \(Opioids\)](#)
- [Hepatitis C and Local Health Departments Educational Series](#)
- [Hepatitis C Public Health Detailing Kit](#)

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### **About NACCHO**

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) represents the nation's nearly 3,000 local governmental health departments. These city, county, metropolitan, district, and tribal departments work every day to protect and promote health and well-being for all people in their communities. For more information about NACCHO, please visit [www.naccho.org](http://www.naccho.org).