FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MORGANTOWN BAND MEMBER POSSIBLY EXPOSED TO RABIES AT JACKSON MILL BAND CAMP
MORGANTOWN, WV – JULY 28, 2016

During the night in the girl’s dormitory, one of the girls was awakened by a bat close to her face. Contact with a bat triggers an immediate investigation into the possibility that the person may have been exposed to rabies. As a result of this event, all occupants staying in the dormitory are now being evaluated to determine their risk of rabies exposure.

Risk assessment falls into three categories: Low, Moderate and High Risk. Those persons who fall into the category of low risk will be advised to remain under observation until it is determined that they are out of danger. If you are in the low risk category and are still concerned about your exposure, we recommend you consult your physician to discuss medical options. We are continuing to collect information from others who stayed at the band camp and will contact you if we receive information that alters your exposure status. Persons in the moderate and high risk category will be advised to consult their health care provider or local health department to determine if they need post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP).

All risk assessment of students is done by personal interview with a parent or guardian. When a risk assessment has been completed, patients and families involved are able to make an informed decision as to what course of action they wish to take. Risk assessment interview documentation will be forwarded to Monongalia County Health Department (MCHD) for review.

In the United States, post-exposure prophylaxis consists of human rabies immune globulin (HRIG) and four doses of rabies vaccine over a 14-day period. Rabies immune globulin and the first dose of rabies vaccine should be given as soon as possible after exposure. Additional doses or rabies vaccine should be given on days 3, 7, and 14 after the first vaccination. Rabies can be prevented almost 100% of the time when PEP is administered soon after a rabies exposure occurs. Current vaccines are relatively painless and are given in your arm, like a flu or tetanus vaccine.

Monongalia County Health Department, Lewis County Health Department, emergency departments and hospitals deal with rabies exposures frequently and stand ready to provide assistance. Many physician offices and urgent care centers do not typically stock rabies vaccine or immunoglobulin due to expense and shelf life, so individuals should call these entities first to insure those services are available.

For more information, call the MCHD at 304-598-5100.

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