

Fox 17 West Michigan News

Friday, February 6, 2015

GREENVILLE, Mich. – After a Greenville High School student was confirmed to have whooping cough, Greenville Public Schools took the Mid Michigan District Health Department’s recommendation and adopted a new policy.

[As of Wednesday, any unvaccinated high school student must stay home for 20 days](#)—the incubation period of the disease—or get their complete round of whooping cough, or pertussis, vaccinations. GHS Principal Jeff Wright said, “They want all students to do well academically, and that staff and families are working together to provide educational supports for all of (their) students.”

Michigan is in the midst a whooping cough epidemic, according to MMDHD Health Officer Marcus Cheatham. He said the disease is “clustering where there are a lot of unvaccinated people.”

In 2014, there were 1,300 cases statewide, Cheatham said. As of 2015, data shows 64 whooping cough cases in Michigan, including two cases in Montcalm County.

Friday afternoon GHS parents told FOX 17 the school was offering the vaccine at the high school.

“When my kids were little and a vaccination was required, I mean it was not a second thought; it was just something that you do to protect them,” said Michele Crawford, mother of GHS student.

Crawford’s daughter, Lauren, is a GHS freshman who had to stay home Thursday and Friday because of GPS’ new policy. Crawford realized her daughter needed one more

round of the six required whooping cough vaccinations, and rushed out of work to bring her to school to get the shot.

Crawford agrees with the school's decision.

“I didn't want her missing 20 days of school,” said Crawford. “I think it's a good idea to have them vaccinated just because you don't know what's out there, especially with people coming in and bringing in diseases.”

Cheatham said whooping cough can have mild to severe side-effects, and kills two out of 100 infants.

“That's why you want to have the older siblings all vaccinated, to protect that young infant,” said Cheatham.

Cheatham said the vaccine is more than 90-percent effective, but believes in parents' choice to not vaccinate, only if those parents are proactive in other ways.

“It should be a matter of choice, but a choice that's made seriously with real information, and then parents deciding to do something else that can help break that chain of transmission and keep people safe,” said Cheatham.

FOX 17 also reached out to several parents who choose to not vaccinate their children, but for various reasons they were unable to comment.

For more information on the pertussis or whooping cough vaccinations, contact your local health department.