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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Kanawha-Charleston Health Department To Administer Monkeypox Vaccine During Rainbow Pride's Big Gay Cookout

CHARLESTON, WEST VIRGINIA – The Kanawha-Charleston Health Department will be on site administering first doses of the monkeypox vaccine during Rainbow Pride of West Virginia's Big Gay Cookout at Coonskin Park this Sunday, August 28, beginning at noon. The vaccine is free.



Dr. Steven Eshenaur, KCHD health officer and executive director, said that monkeypox is a rare, but potentially serious virus that can spread through direct skin-on-skin contact with an infected person. He emphasized that monkeypox is not a sexually transmitted disease, is quite rare and typically not fatal.

"Monkeypox doesn't spread through the air as COVID-19 does, so the threat to the general public is low, but out of an abundance of caution, we are offering the vaccine to those in our community most at risk," said Eshenaur. "We are pleased to be invited to do just that at this Rainbow Pride of West Virginia event."

Chris Gosses, president of Rainbow Pride West Virginia, said he is looking forward to the partnership with KCHD. "As we work to prevent the stigma surrounding monkeypox and its vaccinations, it's important to educate and get treatment to members of our community who are disproportionately affected and impacted by the virus," Gosses said. "LGBTQ folk often struggle 'coming out' to our families and friends. We seldom come out to our doctors and health care providers. As many of our health care needs may be specific to our community, we want to connect folks with affirming and supportive healthcare professionals. Our health matters, too."

"When health care professionals treat LGBTQ folks with the same dignity they treat all patients, that creates a recognition and mutual trust, opening the door for real health-related conversations. KCHD partnering with Rainbow Pride of West Virginia reinforces a healthier community connecting people and families with the services and care they need," Gosses said.

A second dose of monkeypox vaccine will be necessary four weeks after the first dose is administered. Appointments for monkeypox vaccinations are required because once a vial is opened, it is only viable for a short time. West Virginia Health Right also has the monkeypox vaccine and can administer either dose as well.

Monkeypox symptoms include fever, headache, chills, muscle aches, swollen lymph nodes, fatigue, and a rash that can look like pimples or blisters that appear on the face, inside the mouth and on other parts of the body – hands, feet, chest, genitals or anus. The virus is painful and can take four to six weeks to resolve.

Although there is an outbreak in the United States – the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s outbreak map currently shows 16,925 confirmed cases nationwide and four cases in West Virginia. Surrounding states have case numbers ranging from 26 in Kentucky to 465 in Pennsylvania.

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MEDIA: Out of respect for the privacy of those attending West Virginia Pride’s Big Gay Cookout, coverage – particularly with cameras – is not permitted. Please contact Elizabeth Turner, WVRP marketing specialist, (304-993-8384), or Chris Gosses (304-444-4636) for information on how best to cover this event.