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ACUTE FLACCID MYELITIS (AFM)
Statement from the CSTE Executive Board

The Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE) and public health agencies across the nation are dedicated to protecting the health of everyone. We all have great compassion for the children, parents, and families affected by acute flaccid myelitis (AFM), a rare and very serious condition that affects the nervous system causing weakness in the arms or legs and is, in some instances, also associated with long-term disability.

Since 2014, health departments have been working with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to:

- increase awareness among clinicians about AFM – urging them to watch for early signs of acute limb weakness and to rapidly report suspected cases to their health departments.
- help determine the causes of AFM, including the role of viruses, such as enteroviruses, that have been previously associated with AFM cases by conducting detailed investigations to gather clinical and diagnostic information and facilitating laboratory testing.

All jurisdictions have

- either made AFM reportable,
- have provisions for reporting suspicion of acute onset of flaccid paralysis without other apparent cause, or
- have provisions that require reporting of new or emerging conditions of public health importance, like AFM.

While CSTE, CDC and public health agencies work to understand why some children develop AFM, we are confident state and local health departments are working closely with doctors to ensure suspected cases are reported. These data are critically important for helping better understand AFM.

CSTE's mission is to promote effective use of epidemiologic data to guide public health practice and improve health, and advocate for epidemiologic capacity, resources, and scientifically based policy. CSTE, with close collaboration and input from CDC and other stakeholders, also works to coordinate surveillance efforts across states and jurisdictions. Following the identification of cases in 2014, CSTE members approved a surveillance case definition for AFM and placed this condition under standardized surveillance that ensures all cases are counted in the same way across the country. In 2017, CSTE approved the revised surveillance case definition that is the basis for case data reported by individual state and local health departments and the national AFM case information reported by CDC.

CSTE and CDC collaborate in determining which diseases and conditions should be "nationally notifiable," which means having codified voluntary notification of case data from states to CDC. Adding AFM to the list of nationally notifiable conditions is an option that CSTE will continue to consider, but it is important to note that this designation would not change the major efforts underway by CDC and health departments to educate clinicians about this illness, ensure all AFM cases are identified and investigated, and share AFM information with CDC.

State and local health departments, CSTE, and CDC, will continue to collaborate and respond to this complicated and deeply concerning illness, and continue to evaluate national surveillance for AFM.