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DOH reports three additional monkeypox cases

HONOLULU – The Hawai'i Department of Health (DOH) has identified three additional cases of monkeypox. This brings the total number of cases in Hawai'i to eleven.

Two individuals are O'ahu residents. DOH established a connection to a previously reported case for one O'ahu resident. Connections to previously reported cases are under investigation for the second O'ahu resident. The third individual is a non-resident who was diagnosed on Kaua'i and whose case is associated with travel outside of Hawai'i.

"Monkeypox cases continue to increase across the country—and we expect to see more cases in Hawai'i," said Deputy State Epidemiologist Dr. Nathan Tan. "We continue to take action to support individuals diagnosed with monkeypox, conduct contact tracing, vaccinate close contacts and those with high-risk exposure, and educate the community."

The risk to most Hawai'i residents remains low. While most people diagnosed with monkeypox experience mild to moderate illness, the rash and sores can be itchy and painful. Infection begins with flu-like symptoms such as fever, headache, muscle aches, chills, exhaustion, and swollen lymph nodes. Infection progresses to a rash or sores, often on the hands, feet, chest, face, or genitals. Individuals generally become ill within 21 days of exposure.

DOH is using Hawai'i's limited vaccine allocation to vaccinate close contacts of people known to have monkeypox, and for people who may have had high-risk exposures in venues or areas where monkeypox is actively spreading. DOH pre-positioned vaccine in all counties and is coordinating distribution and administration. Vaccines are not available through healthcare providers at this time, but availability is expected to increase in the coming weeks and months.

Monkeypox is mainly spread through close, intimate contact with body fluids, lesion material, or items used by someone with monkeypox. Monkeypox may be spread through large respiratory droplets. These droplets generally cannot travel more than a few feet, so prolonged face-to-face contact is required.

Individuals with monkeypox symptoms, including flu-like symptoms, swollen lymph nodes, or new or unexplained rash or sores, should immediately contact their healthcare provider.

Nationwide, the current cases are primarily spreading among social networks of gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men. In Hawai'i, at least some of the cases have been reported among gay or bisexual men. However, anyone who has close contact with someone with monkeypox is at risk of infection, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

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