



# SAN BENITO COUNTY

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

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*Healthy People in Healthy Communities*

## WHY ARE THERE PORTABLE TOILETS AND HANDWASHING STATIONS IN HOLLISTER?

California has had recent hepatitis A virus (HAV) outbreaks. They began in San Diego County in November 2016 and spread to Santa Cruz and Los Angeles Counties in 2017. Monterey County declared an outbreak in 2018, which still continues. Many people have been hospitalized, and some have died during these outbreaks. In an effort to prevent such an outbreak in San Benito County, portable toilets with hand washing stations have been placed in areas where at-risk populations congregate.

Hepatitis A is a highly contagious liver infection caused by the hepatitis A virus. It can range from a mild illness lasting a few weeks to a severe illness lasting several months. Although rare, hepatitis A can cause death in some people. Hepatitis A usually spreads when a person unknowingly ingests the virus from objects, food, or drinks contaminated by small, undetected amounts of stool from an infected person.

The majority of people who have been infected with hepatitis A virus in the California outbreaks are people experiencing homelessness and/or using illicit drugs in settings of limited sanitation. A lack of toilet and handwashing facilities in places where at-risk populations congregate has been a contributing factor in these outbreaks.

San Benito County Public Health Services has actively responded to prevent an outbreak in our community. Along with our clinical and community partners, we have organized vaccination campaigns targeting the at-risk populations and those that serve them. In addition, we have provided education to the greater community, and ensured adequate sanitation facilities. Portable toilets with handwashing stations have been placed in areas where at-risk populations gather which otherwise have no public toilets available.

To date our efforts have been successful in preventing an outbreak of Hepatitis A in San Benito County. Hepatitis A outbreaks are on the decline throughout California. We anticipate removing the portable toilets when the outbreaks in California, especially our neighboring counties, are controlled.

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