



## HAYWOOD COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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**Carmine F. Rocco, M.S., Health Director**

### **Dear Parent or Guardian of a 5<sup>th</sup> Grade child:**

As school nurse, we want every child to be healthy. We want to inform you of a concern impacting schools across the country. Whooping cough, also known as “pertussis” is a serious illness that spreads easily and is on the rise in the United States.

Most babies and young children get shots to prevent pertussis. However, this protection typically begins to wear off by the time they reach their preteen years. Children are at higher risk in school settings where they are in close contact with lots of other kids. In fact, some schools across the country have had to close because of pertussis outbreaks.

There is now a booster shot for preteens and teens that adds pertussis protection to the routine tetanus booster shot. The Tdap (TEE-dap) immunization prevents pertussis in adolescents.

**Effective January 1, 2008, all students attending public school who are entering the 6<sup>th</sup> grade on or after August 1, 2008 according to the administrative rule, 10A NCAC 41A.0404, adds the requirement of a booster dose of Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, and acellular pertussis) vaccination if five or more years have passed since the last tetanus shot.**

**This means that your child must have this vaccine prior to entering 6<sup>th</sup> grade or they will not be allowed to attend school after the first 30 days of school.** Haywood County School nurses strongly recommend that your child be immunized with Tdap prior to the start of the school year.

In an effort to help parents get their child immunized before entering the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, Haywood County Health Department will hold a special **clinic** for students needing this vaccine. This clinic will be held on **Thursday, April 21 from 8am-5:30pm at the Health Department.** (This is the Thursday of Spring Break) No appointment will be necessary and the vaccine will be free. If you have Medicaid or Blue Cross/Blue Shield insurance, please bring your card. The Health Department is located at 2177 Asheville Highway; this is across from Junaluska Elementary school. **The school nurses will not be offering a Tdap clinic at each elementary school this year.** Information and permission slips will be on the Haywood County School website or at your child's school. Please take advantage of this opportunity. If you have any questions, please contact your child's school nurse.