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For Release: July 28, 2022

**MONKEYPOX PRESENTS NEW CHALLENGES TO STRAINED,  
UNDER-RESOURCED PUBLIC HEALTH SYSTEM**  
***County Health Officials Call for US Department of Health and Human  
Services to Update the Public Health Readiness and Emergency  
Preparedness (PREP) Act to Cover Response Efforts***

(Albany, New York) - The New York State Association of County Health Officials (NYSACHO) today sounded an alarm concerning the steady growth of monkeypox cases in many areas of New York State. The spread of the illness, technically known as orthopoxvirus, presents new challenges to New York State's already strained and under-resourced public health system, including balancing the importance of health equity and accessibility to vaccine for eligible persons.

As of July 27, 2022, more than 1,200 cases of monkeypox have been reported across New York. Case numbers are tracked by the state Department of Health at:  
<https://health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/zoonoses/monkeypox/>

Nancy McGraw, NYSACHO President and Sullivan County Public Health Director, said: "One of the biggest challenges to countering the growth and impact of monkeypox is the limited amount of vaccine that is currently available in New York and nationally. We are aware that the state is working closely with the federal government to acquire additional doses so that we can continue to expand the availability of vaccine."

"However, vaccine supply is not the only obstacle to a comprehensive response," McGraw said. "The lingering and profound impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has significantly strained public health staff and resources at both the state and local levels, making our collective response to new threats such as monkeypox considerably more challenging."

According to NYSACHO, the monkeypox vaccine is a safe and effective means of protecting those at risk and those who have been exposed to the virus. For those who may be considering vaccination, there are specific eligibility requirements associated with the vaccine, which can be found here:  
<https://health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/zoonoses/monkeypox/vaccine.htm>.

While the risk to the general public remains relatively low, communities should be aware of how to prevent contracting and spreading the virus, particularly among certain



populations that are being affected by monkeypox more than others, including men who have sex with men.

Persons with symptoms (<https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/symptoms.html>) are encouraged to contact their primary care physician who will determine the most appropriate course of action including sharing easy ways of preventing the transmission of monkeypox virus.

NYSACHO Executive Director Sarah Ravenhall said: “The advent and growth of monkeypox in New York State serves as another reminder of the critical role our public health infrastructure plays in protecting our communities. State DOH and local health departments are working tirelessly to coordinate a monkeypox response, and we are grateful for their hard work.

“We eagerly await the state’s issuance of Imminent Threat to Public Health, which we anticipate will take place soon, and further, we are requesting that the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services issue a declaration that will include orthopoxvirus under the PREP act, which will help secure the health care professionals and resources needed by local health departments to field an efficient and effective response,” Ravenhall said.

ABOUT NYSACHO: The New York State Association of County Health Officials is a membership association representing all 58 local health departments in New York State. NYSACHO supports, advocates for, and empowers local health departments in their work to promote health and wellness and prevent disease, disability and injury throughout New York State. NYSACHO is recognized as the collective voice leading policy, education, and advocacy to create healthy, safe communities in New York State. Visit [nysacho.org](https://nysacho.org) for more information.