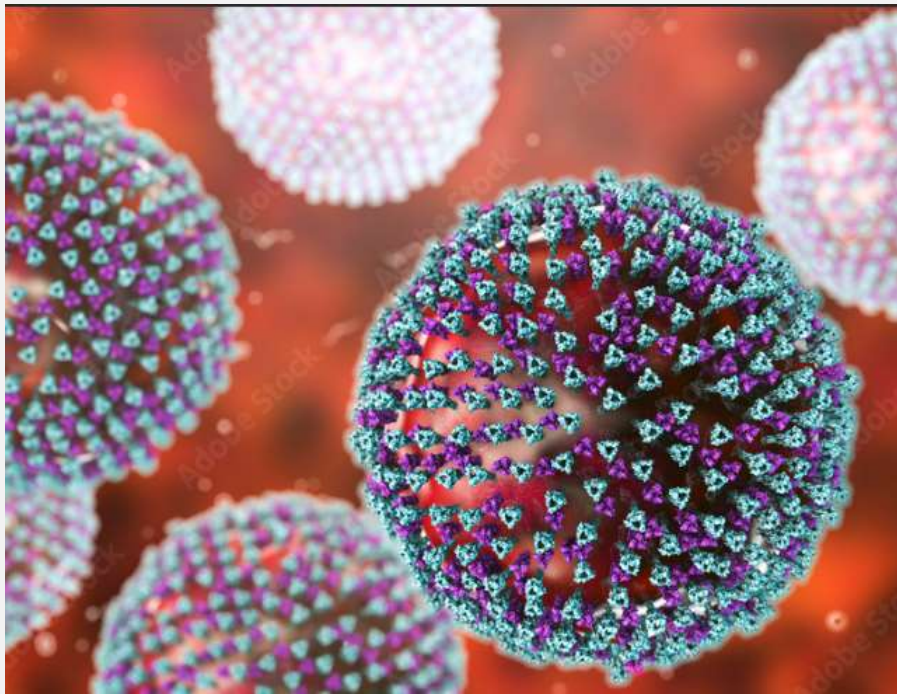


# Department of State Health Services Measles Response 2025

Presentation to House Committee on Public Health  
March 3, 2025

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Commissioner

## Background: Measles



- Measles is highly contagious.
- Measles is spread by respiratory droplets like flu or COVID-19 and is also airborne like tuberculosis.
  - That means measles virus can stay in the air for up to 2 hours, with the potential to infect people who are in that airspace.
- Up to 9 out of 10 unvaccinated people will become infected if exposed to measles.
- The best protection against measles is measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine.
  - MMR vaccine provides long-lasting protection against all strains of measles.
  - The MMR vaccine has been used in the U.S. for more than 50 years.

## Background: Measles Symptoms

- Early symptoms (first few days):
  - Moderate fever
  - Cough
  - Runny nose
  - Red eyes
  - Sore throat
- Later symptoms (after a few days):
  - High fever (can go over 104°F)
  - Blue-white spots inside the mouth (Koplik spots)
  - Red-brown rash that starts at the hairline and spreads down the body
- The typical incubation period of measles is 11 to 12 days.
  - It takes an average of 14 days between the time of exposure until the typical measles rash presents in the patient.



*Child with Classic Measles Rash*

## Measles Complications

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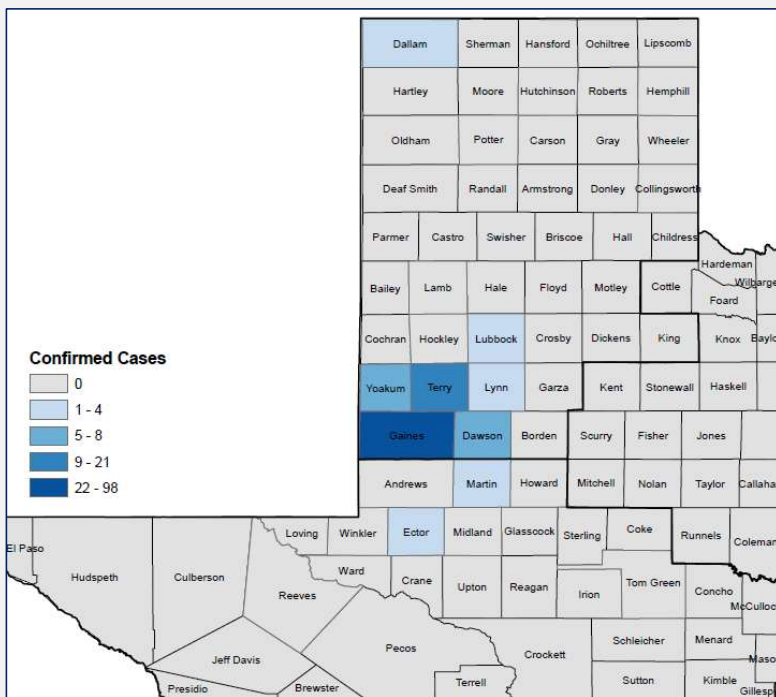
- Measles can cause serious health complications, especially in children younger than 5 years of age, pregnant women, and people who are immunocompromised.
    - About one in 5 people who get sick will need hospital care.
    - One in 20 will develop pneumonia.
    - Rarely, measles can lead to swelling of the brain and death.
    - It can also cause pregnancy complications like premature birth and low birth weight.
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## 2025 Texas Measles Outbreak

- On January 30, DSHS announced two confirmed cases of measles in residents of Gaines County.
  - Earlier in January, two measles cases occurred in unvaccinated residents of Harris County who had recent international travel.
  - These were the first confirmed measles cases in Texas since 2023.
- Both Gaines County cases were in unvaccinated school age children who were hospitalized in Lubbock and subsequently discharged.
  - Since these initial cases, an outbreak has continued in the South Plains/Panhandle area of Texas.
- DSHS is supporting South Plains and Panhandle communities in coordination with South Plains Public Health District and Lubbock Public Health to respond to the outbreak.
- DSHS is also actively monitoring the spread of disease and preparing for potential future outbreak scenarios, in coordination with public health and emergency management partners.

# 2025 Texas Measles Outbreak Cases by County

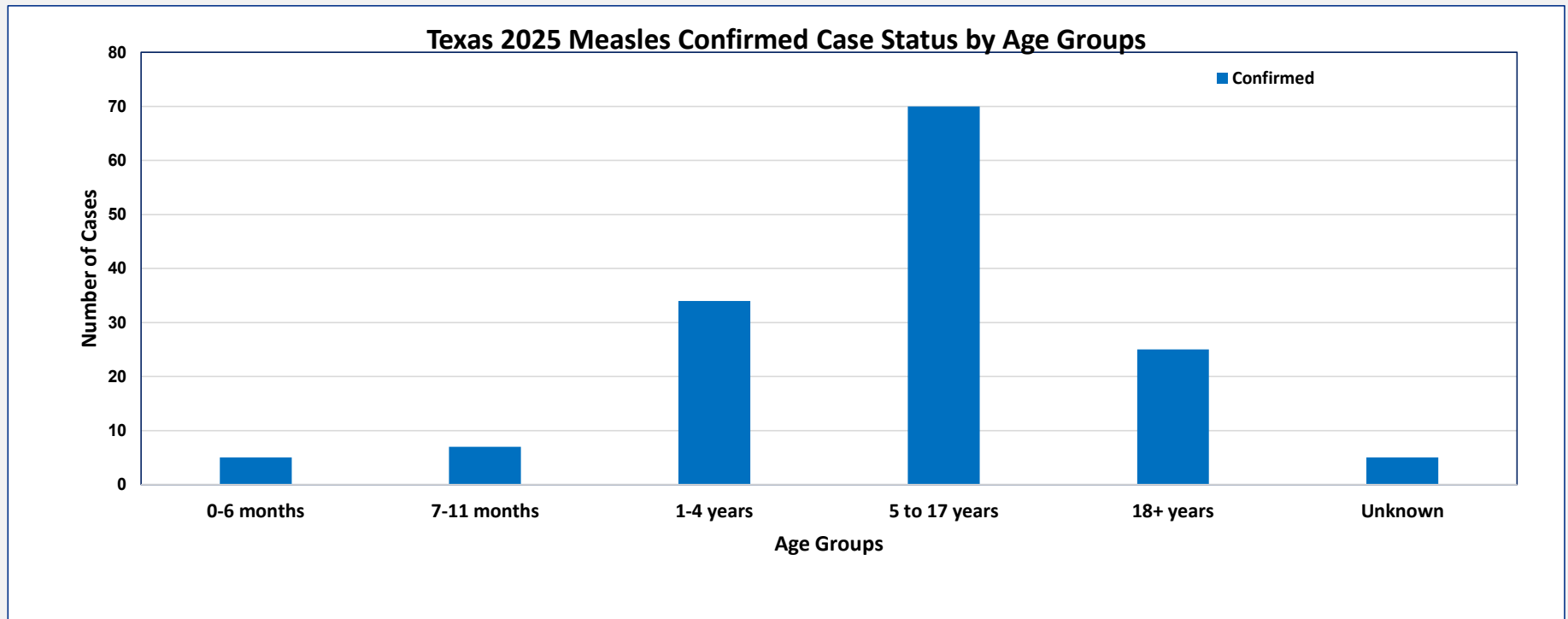
*Data as of February 28, 2025*



County	Confirmed Cases
Dallam	4
Dawson	8
Gaines	98
Lubbock	2
Lynn	2
Terry	21
Yoakum	6
Ector	2
Martin	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>146</b>

# 2025 Texas Measles Outbreak Cases by Age Group

*Data as of February 28, 2025*



# 2025 Texas Measles Outbreak Hospitalizations

*Data as of February 28, 2025*

<b>Hospitalized<sup>1</sup> Confirmed Cases by Age Groups</b>			
<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Hospitalized</b>	<b>Intensive Care Unit Admission</b>	<b>Emergency Department Only</b>
0-6 months	1	1	0
7-11 months	2	0	0
1-4 years	6	1	3
5 to 17 years	7	2	3
18+ years	1	0	3
Unknown	2	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>

<sup>1</sup>Hospitalization status indicates if the case was ever an inpatient



# 2025 Texas Measles Outbreak Response Activities

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## Measles specimen collection sites

Specimen collection sites in Gaines County and Terry County are operating 7 days a week.

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Specimen collection strike teams (4) are available to go to locations with no fixed site.

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## Laboratory capacity

The DSHS lab is increasing measles testing capacity to 96 specimens a day.

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DSHS is partnering with Texas Tech for additional laboratory capacity.

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Other expected partnerships with public health labs for measles testing include: El Paso, Bexar, and Tarrant counties.

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## 2025 Texas Measles Outbreak Response Activities (cont.)

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### Access to vaccine for individuals who want them.

DSHS is hosting vaccine clinics 7 days a week, and ad hoc clinics at community locations.

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DSHS is supporting local clinics and providers by supplying vaccine doses for locations in Amarillo, Andrews County, Ector County, Lubbock, and South Plains.

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DSHS will also maintain a cache at the DSHS pharmacy for unique situations.

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DSHS is creating deployable vaccine strike teams (5) that can go to areas with need.

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### Access to postexposure protection to prevent illness.

DSHS has vaccine stock available for postexposure. If an unvaccinated person is vaccinated with an MMR dose within 72 hours of exposure, it can help reduce the likelihood of illness or severity of symptoms.

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DSHS also has stock of immunoglobulin that can provide short term protection against measles. IG is typically given to children under 12 months, pregnant women, and people who are immunocompromised.

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## 2025 Texas Measles Outbreak Response Activities (cont.)

**Surge staffing** to assist with specimen collection, epidemiology, and vaccination.

DSHS has deployed DSHS staff from other regions to the impacted areas.

27 contractors are arriving beginning today to assist local public health operations.

DSHS has requested a team from CDC to help local health departments with epidemiology work and infection control in hospital facilities.

**Messaging** to ensure individuals know MMR vaccine is available.

Public awareness efforts will cover the Panhandle and South Plains region.

Initial education will include billboards and targeted social media messaging, beginning in Gaines County this week.

DSHS can expand education efforts to other regions if they become affected.

# 2025 Texas Measles Outbreak Response Activities (cont.)

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## Awareness and education for providers, schools, and local health departments

DSHS has issued health alerts to ensure provider awareness of the outbreak.

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DSHS is holding regular webinars and calls with professional associations, local health departments, schools, and local officials to provide information and answer questions.

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DSHS has sent out guidance documents to ensure up-to-date knowledge on measles screening, testing, and protocols.

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## Hospital planning

There are no hospital capacity issues at this time. DSHS is poised to assist hospitals that may need assistance as the outbreak continues.

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DSHS is instituting hospital reporting this week to ensure situational awareness of pediatric bed availability.

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DSHS will assist if any patient transfers are needed, in coordination with the Regional Advisory Councils.

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DSHS can also deploy the Emergency Medical Task Force (EMTF) to assist with patient transport if this becomes an issue.

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## 2025 Texas Measles Outbreak Response Activities (cont.)

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### **Coordination with appropriate state and federal agencies**

Texas Division of Emergency Management is a key partner in planning and preparing for potential outbreak scenarios.

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DSHS is also coordinating with the Texas Education Agency as certain students may be unable to attend class due to illness or exposure.

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DSHS has been in communication with U.S. Health and Human Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to request assets including vaccine, post exposure therapies, additional personnel capacity, and translation of educational materials.

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## Expectations for the 2025 Texas Measles Outbreak

- Due to the number of suspect cases, outbreak-associated cases will continue to increase.
- Other measles outbreaks like the 2019 New York outbreak lasted months.
- Similar to the New York outbreak, Texas may face months of ongoing transmission.
- Children who test positive for measles, as well as unvaccinated or undervaccinated children who are exposed to measles, will be excluded from school due to the contagiousness of the disease, impacting schools and learning.
- Overall MMR coverage in Texas is lower than for the United States. However, many Texas communities have higher vaccine coverage rates that will prevent widespread transmission of measles throughout the state.