

Texas Legislature Mandates Study of MRSA Reporting

Physicians and clinical laboratories in Bexar, Brazos, Potter and Randall counties will soon be required to report methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* infections. Health & Safety Code, Section 81.0445, passed during the 80th Texas Legislative Session, relates to a pilot program for reporting infections caused by the bacteria methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA).

Section 81.0445 requires the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) to conduct a pilot program for reporting MRSA. In compliance with Section 81.0445, DSHS selected local health authorities to administer the pilot program. The pilot program includes 1) reporting of all cases of MRSA by all clinical laboratories within the area served by the selected local health authorities, 2) studying the cost and feasibility of adding MRSA to the reportable conditions list, 3) collecting data related to prevention and possible sources of MRSA infections, 4) providing information about MRSA, and 5) compiling and making available to the public a summary of the pilot program. By September 1, 2009, DSHS will submit a report to the legislature concerning the effectiveness of the pilot program in tracking and reducing the number of MRSA infections. Health and Safety Code, Section 81.0445 expires on September 1, 2009.

The San Antonio Metropolitan Health District, Brazos County Health Department and the Amarillo Bi-City-County Health District have agreed to conduct the pilot program. Reporting will occur for one year, tentatively July 1, 2008 through June 30, 2009, although the specific time period has not been established. Physicians and clinical laboratories in Bexar, Brazos, Potter and Randall counties will be required to report MRSA skin and soft tissue infections and invasive MRSA disease, e.g. septicemia and meningitis. Information to be reported includes patient name, address, telephone number, age, date of birth, sex, race and ethnicity, date of culture, site of culture, drug susceptibility results, and physician name, address, and telephone number.