NEW MEXICO HEALTH ALERT NETWORK (HAN) UPDATE
Update: New Mexico Department of Health requests reports of possible cases of vaping-associated lung disease

Summary
Since August 2, 2019, CDC has been monitoring cases of respiratory disease that are associated with vaping. The etiology is unknown, and as of August 23, 2019, there have been 203 possible cases across 23 states, including one death in Illinois. After notification of a possible case on August 15 by the New Mexico Poison Center, the New Mexico Department of Health is requesting reports of suspected hospitalized cases. As of August 26, four cases have been identified and interviewed in New Mexico. Four more patients are being investigated as possible cases.

Disease
Patients have experienced gradual onset of difficulty breathing, shortness of breath, or chest pain and fatigue prior to hospitalization. Many patients also report mild to moderate gastrointestinal illness including fever, anorexia, nausea, abdominal pain and diarrhea. Chest radiographs show bilateral opacities, typically in the lower lobes, and CT imaging of the chest shows diffuse ground glass opacities, often with subpleural sparing. Cases do not have typical pneumonia and did not improve with antibiotics. Some patients had progressive respiratory compromise requiring endotracheal intubation, ventilation or ICU care, but subsequently improved with systemic steroids.

Potential Exposures
All four patients used tetrahydrocannabinol (THC)-containing vape products in the weeks preceding disease onset. Products used by cases have contained THC, CBD, nicotine, flavors and other chemicals.

Management
At this time, it is unknown what is causing and contributing to these symptoms. Infectious etiologies should be ruled out with at least a respiratory viral panel. An influenza PCR should also be performed once influenza season starts. Aggressive supportive care is warranted, and in severe cases, it is recommended that pulmonary and critical care specialists be consulted.

Prevention
At this time, vaping tetrahydrocannabinol (THC)-containing products appears to be associated with illness. It is unknown what specific product(s) or chemicals may be causing this disease.

NMDOH Request of Healthcare Providers
Please report suspected cases to the New Mexico Department of Health Epidemiology and Response Division as soon as possible at (505)827-0006. Suspect cases should receive a respiratory viral panel to rule out major infectious causes of illness. NMDOH will investigate suspect cases within New Mexico to look for any common exposures, including products and chemicals linked to the illnesses. NMDOH is working with the CDC and other state health departments to investigate this emerging condition.