FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE | February 4, 2016

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**Legacy Community Health to Screen Pregnant Women for Zika Virus**

HOUSTON, TX -- In light of the confirmed cases of Zika virus in Harris County, Legacy Community Health, one of the nation’s largest Federally Qualified Health Centers, is now offering its pregnant patients clinical screening for the mosquito-borne virus. With 22 clinics across southeast Texas, Legacy provides prenatal care to about 300 pregnant women per day, some of whom travel to Zika-affected Latin American countries.

"Given the patient population we serve and the confirmed cases in Houston, we are taking the precautionary measure of screening our pregnant patients by asking their travel history and if they are experiencing possible symptoms of Zika virus," said Dr. Ann Barnes, chief medical officer at Legacy Community Health. "In addition, we are ramping up our patient communications through individual letters and a radio ad to reiterate our guidance that pregnant women not travel to Central and South American countries where the virus is an epidemic as outlined by the Centers for Disease Control."

Zika is most commonly transmitted through mosquito bites, and most patients are unaware they have been infected. Symptoms include fever, rash, joint pain, or red eyes.  The best prevention method is to avoid mosquito bites by using insect repellant, wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants, and staying in air-conditioned spaces.

Local health officials have confirmed at least six Zika cases in the Houston area, all of which were imported from certain Latin American countries.  The CDC has issued travel notices for now [30 countries](http://www.cdc.gov/zika/geo/index.html) where Zika is spreading. Earlier this week, Dallas County health officials confirmed the first known U.S. case of the virus being transmitted through sexual contact.

"We are certainly monitoring the sexual transmission case out of Dallas, but, for now, the spotlight really should remain on the most common method of transmission: mosquito bites," said Dr. Natalie Vanek, an infectious disease specialist at Legacy.

[*Legacy Community Health,*](http://www.legacycommunityhealth.org.)*a not-for-profit Federally Qualified Health Center, provides comprehensive care to over 85,000 community members regardless of their ability to pay. The agency, a United Way of Greater Houston agency, provides adult primary care, HIV/AIDS care, pediatrics, OB/GYN and maternity, dental, vision and behavioral health.*

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