



DATE: June 18, 2015

TO: Washington State Board of Health Members

FROM: Diana Yu, Board Member

SUBJECT: BRIEFING ON ELEVATED RATE OF ANENCEPHALY IN SOUTH CENTRAL WASHINGTON

Background and Summary:

On January 14, 2015, the State Board of Health (Board) heard an update on the Department of Health's ongoing investigation of an elevated rate of anencephaly in Yakima, Benton and Franklin counties. Anencephaly is a rare but serious birth defect that affects the development of a baby's brain and skull. Babies with anencephaly die during pregnancy or shortly after birth. This serious birth defect occurs nationally at a rate of about 2.1 per 10000 births, but in the three counties in central Washington the rate may be about five times higher.

On April 18, 2015, the Washington State Democratic Central Committee (WSDCC) passed a resolution calling on the legislature, the governor and the State Board of Health to require a more thorough investigation into the cause and resolution of this issue. Please refer to Board materials under Tab 6 for today's presentation, the WSDCC resolution and the Department of Health response letter.

Kathy Lofy, State Health Officer, will be presenting, by telephone, more information on the Department's continuing investigation, surveillance and prevention activities.

Staff Contact: David DeLong