

## Varicella Now Reportable by Name

*By Jan Pelosi*

On November 10, 2000, the Texas Board of Health approved a change in disease reporting in Texas, which should interest anyone working in an immunization or disease surveillance program. Varicella (chickenpox) has been a reportable disease in Texas since 1972, but data were collected only as aggregate case counts on a weekly basis.

With licensure of the varicella vaccine in March 1995, chickenpox officially became a vaccine-preventable disease. Since vaccine licensure, varicella morbidity has steadily declined in Texas, and if the present trend continues during the closing weeks of 2000, Texas will record its lowest varicella morbidity in history with fewer than 4000 cases statewide. It is quite likely that varicella may go the way of measles in only a few more years. What a vaccine success!

Beginning January 2001, the Surveillance & Epidemiology Program will begin collecting individual case information for all reported cases of chickenpox in Texas. Don't be alarmed! You will not be required to "investigate" every case of chickenpox, but we do ask that you provide the name, address, date of birth, sex, race/ethnicity, as well as the date of onset for each case.

These data are essential as we evaluate the success of our varicella vaccination efforts in Texas. Remember too that varicella vaccine is now required for all children enrolling in public or private schools in Texas, as well as for children enrolling in any licensed child-care facility.

Please contact your local or regional health office for new varicella reporting forms, and look for additional information on chickenpox reporting coming soon on our web site.

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