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New Vaccine Requirements for 6th Grade Students this Fall Free Vaccine at Public Health Department While Supplies Last

Muskegon, MI – All parents of students entering the 6th grade this fall should be aware of new vaccination requirements. Starting this fall with the 2010-2011 school year, all 11 year-old students are required to have one dose of meningococcal (MCV4 or MPSV4) vaccine and one dose of tetanus/diphtheria/acellular pertussis (Tdap) vaccine. This new vaccination requirement also applies to all 11 – 18 year-old students who are changing school districts. These vaccines help to prevent potentially deadly outbreaks of meningitis and pertussis. Adolescents who do not have these vaccinations up-to-date may be excluded from school until vaccinated.

According to the Michigan Care Improvement Registry which stores immunization records, this new requirement affects as many as 2,000 students. Because so many children are impacted by this new requirement, the public health department is encouraging parents to get their children up-to-date with these vaccines throughout the spring and summer instead of waiting until the fall when the back-to-school rush annually occurs.

“Typically, most families don’t worry about getting their kids vaccinations up-to-date until a week or so before school starts,” explains Ken Kraus, Public Health Director. “Because so many students this fall will need these two newly required shots, waiting until the last minute may cause problems like long waits, running out of vaccine, or having students miss school because they haven’t been vaccinated. We need parents to get their kids vaccinated now and not wait until the end of August.”

Thanks to funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, Public Health – Muskegon County has over 500 doses of these vaccines available for free at the public health department. While supplies last, these shots are free to families whose children are uninsured or are insured but the insurance does not cover the cost of vaccines, or it has expensive deductibles or co-pays. Families are encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity early on as the free supply may be exhausted before back-to-school time. Once the free supply is gone, the cost for these two vaccines is \$150.

The Immunization program at the public health department is a walk-in clinic open Monday through Friday from Noon until 4:30 pm. Families who have insurance that does cover the costs associated with vaccinations are encouraged to make an appointment for their child with their child’s health care provider as soon as possible.

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Editorial Note: Also new this fall, all children entering kindergarten, all 6th grade students, and all children changing school districts are also required to have two doses of varicella (Var) vaccine or history of chickenpox disease.