



J. Picard

STATE OF LOUISIANA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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August 15, 2006

UNION PARISH SCHOOL BOARD

TO: Parish/City School Superintendents
Superintendents of BESE Schools
State Director of Special School District
Acting Superintendent of Recovery School District
Administrators of Type 2 Charter Schools

FROM: Cecil J. Picard
State Superintendent of Education

SUBJECT: HB 154 and SB 448

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RECEIVED

On June 22, 2006, Governor Blanco signed Louisiana HB 154 and SB 448, which require city, parish or other local public school boards to provide and disseminate information about meningococcal disease to parents and/or guardians. The law is effective beginning August 15, 2006. Schools may provide the information through a school website, school newsletters, student handbook or other appropriate means of disseminating information.

Meningococcal disease, which is caused by bacteria, is a serious illness. The bacteria infect the bloodstream and the linings of the brain and spinal cord. According to the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), it is the leading cause of bacterial meningitis in children 2-18 years old in the United States. It presents with flu-like symptoms, and if not treated early can lead to swelling of the brain and spinal cord as well as permanent disabilities such as deafness, mental retardation, loss of limbs, problems with nervous system and even death. In the United States, about 2,600 people get meningococcal disease each year. Meningococcal infections can be treated with drugs such as penicillin, but still 1 out of every 10 people who get the disease dies from it, and many others are affected for life.

In the United States, there are two meningococcal vaccines available. Meningococcal polysaccharide vaccine (MPSV4), which is marketed as Menomune™, has been available since the 1980s. Meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MCV4), which is marketed as Menactra™, was licensed in early 2005. Both vaccines are nearly 90% effective in preventing 4 types of meningococcal disease (types A, C, Y and W-135). These four types cause about 70% of the disease in the United States. Because the vaccines do not protect against type B, it does not prevent all cases of meningococcal disease.

Due to the limited supply in vaccinations, the only students eligible for vaccination are those unvaccinated adolescents at high school entry and college freshman living in dormitories. Individuals seeking vaccination should contact their private providers, as supplies are limited in the Public Health sector.

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To learn more information about meningococcal disease and the vaccine, please contact your local Office of Public Health or visit the CDC website at www.cdc.gov/nip .

If you have any questions, please contact John Dupre, Division Director, School and Community Support at 1-877-453-2721. Your time and cooperation are appreciated.

CJP:DNG:JD:rcj

Enclosure

c: Donna Nola-Ganey
John Dupre
Principals