

Insert Date Here

Dear Parents, Guardians and Students,

Indiana State Law IC 20-30-5-18 requires that school systems provide important information to parents and guardians of all students about meningitis and the vaccines available to prevent one type of this serious illness at the beginning of each school year.

One type of meningitis is caused by a bacteria called *Neisseria meningitidis*. Infections caused by this bacteria are serious, and may lead to death. Symptoms of an infection with *Neisseria meningitidis* may include a high fever, headache, stiff neck, nausea, confusion and a rash. This disease can become severe very quickly and often leads to deafness, mental retardation, loss of arms or legs, and even death. It can be spread through the air or by direct contact with saliva from another person with the disease.

There is a vaccine (Menactra) that can prevent most cases of meningitis caused by this bacteria in people over the age of 2. The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends vaccination against this disease for all children and adolescents 11-18 years of age. Children ages 2 -10 who have sickle cell anemia or problems with their immune systems should also receive this vaccine.

Beginning with the 2010 – 2011 school year, one dose of Menactra will be required for students in grades 6 – 12. This is a new legal requirement (Indiana Administrative Code 410 IAC 1-1-1). All students entering grades 6-12 will need to have a record of this immunization in the state immunization registry (CHIRP) or a signed written statement from a medical provider prior to the start of the school year. Check with your doctor to see if your child's record is available in the state immunization registry (CHIRP).

Many local health departments and private healthcare providers offer this vaccine. Your child may also be able to get this vaccine at school free of charge. Please check with the school nurse to see if a clinic will be offered at school.

Additional information about meningococcal disease can be found at:

The Indiana State Department of Health

<http://www.in.gov/isdh/22121.htm>

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/mening/default.htm>

The Indiana Department of Education School Health Student Services

<http://www.doe.in.gov/sservices/sn.htm>

Sincerely,