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Wolf Administration and Carlisle School Leaders Team Up to Remind Parents That it's Time for Back-to-School Vaccinations

New Immunization Regulations Reduce Provisional Period to Five Days

Carlisle, PA – Today, Acting Secretary of Health and Physician General Dr. Rachel Levine, Insurance Commissioner Teresa Miller, and Executive Deputy Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Education Dr. David Volkman visited Carlisle Area High School to remind parents to have their children vaccinated before the new school year.

“It’s very important for all young people to receive immunizations on time,” said Dr. Levine. “This includes being up-to-date on age-appropriate immunizations within five days of the start of the new school year. I thank Carlisle Area High School for giving us the chance to talk about immunizations and their importance to the community.”

A recent change in state regulations altered the provisional period in which students could attend school without their vaccinations from eight months to five days. Children in grades K-12 need the following immunizations for attendance: tetanus, diphtheria, polio, MMR (measles, mumps, rubella), hepatitis B, and chickenpox.

Children entering the seventh grade also need additional immunizations of meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MCV) and tetanus, diphtheria, acellular pertussis (Tdap). If a child does not have at least one dose of the above vaccinations, he or she risks exclusion from school.

“In order to learn, grow, and achieve, students need to be healthy and well. Immunizations help ensure those conditions exist for all children in our schools,” said Dr. Volkman. “The departments of Education, Insurance, and Health encourage Pennsylvanians to get vaccinated before the school year begins, so classrooms can remain safe and supportive spaces for students to learn.”

These requirements allow for the following exemptions: medical reason, religious belief, or philosophical/strong moral or ethical conviction. Even if your child is exempt from immunizations, he or she may be excluded from school during an outbreak of vaccine preventable disease.

Under the Affordable Care Act, most insurance plans, including those bought through the federal Marketplace, are required to cover school vaccinations as a free preventive service without charging a copayment or coinsurance, regardless of whether or not you have met your yearly deductible.

“When a new school year starts, there are many costs parents have to consider with textbooks, school supplies, and other expenses,” Insurance Commissioner Teresa Miller said. “Thankfully, immunizations aren’t one of them, as most insurance plans cover school vaccinations with no cost to the consumer.”

It is important to make sure that the doctor or provider who administers the immunization is within your health insurance plan’s network, or you may be responsible for the cost. More information on preventive services is available at HealthCare.gov.

The Department of Health regularly schedules immunization clinics year-round across the state. If a child doesn't have any insurance coverage or if insurance does not cover back-to-school immunizations, children who meet the requirements can get all of the vaccines listed above at one of the commonwealth's state health centers or local health departments. Immunizations are provided at little or no cost for children through 18 years of age who are Medicaid eligible, uninsured, underinsured, or American Indian or Alaska Native. The cost is \$5 per child (payable by check or money order) for families above income guidelines; however, no child will be turned away because of an inability to pay.

Parents whose children meet the immunization requirements must call 1-877-PA-HEALTH (1-877-724-3258) to schedule an appointment. Parents should have their vaccination records available when they call to make an appointment. A parent/legal guardian must accompany the child receiving immunizations. DOH staff must be notified before the appointment if someone other than the child's parent/legal guardian will be accompanying him/her.

For more information, visit www.dontwaitvaccinate.pa.gov or call 1-877-PA-HEALTH.

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