

[COPY ONTO YOUR SCHOOL LETTERHEAD]

SAMPLE RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL PARENT LETTER

Adapted from the American College Health Association

[INSERT DATE HERE]

Dear Parent:

I am writing to inform you about meningococcal disease, a potentially fatal bacterial infection commonly referred to as meningitis, and a new law in New York State. On July 22, 2003, Governor Pataki signed New York State Public Health Law (NYS PHL) §2167 requiring residential schools to distribute information about meningococcal disease and vaccination to all students in grades 7 - 12. This law became effective on August 15, 2003 (prior to the Fall 2003 semester).

[INSERT SCHOOL NAME HERE] is required to maintain a record of the following for each student:

- A response to receipt of meningococcal disease and vaccine information signed by the student or student's parent or guardian. This must include information on the availability and cost of the meningococcal meningitis vaccine (Menactra™); AND EITHER
- A record of meningococcal meningitis immunization within the past 10 years; OR
- An acknowledgement of meningococcal disease risks and refusal of meningococcal meningitis immunization signed by the student or student's parent or guardian.

Meningococcal meningitis is rare. However, when it strikes, its flu-like symptoms make diagnosis difficult. If not treated early, meningococcal meningitis can lead to swelling of the fluid surrounding the brain and spinal column as well as severe and permanent disabilities, such as hearing loss, brain damage, seizures, limb amputation and even death.

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SAMPLE PARENT LETTER, cont.

Cases of meningitis among teens and young adults 15 to 24 years of age have more than doubled since 1991. The disease strikes about 2,500 Americans each year and claims about 300 lives.

In February 2005, the CDC recommended a new vaccine, known as Menactra™, for use to prevent meningococcal disease. The previous version of this vaccine, Menomune™, was first available in the United States in 1985. Both vaccines are 85% to 100% effective in preventing the 4 kinds of the meningococcus germ (types A, C, Y, W-135). These 4 types cause about 70% of the disease in the United States. Because the vaccine does not include type B, which accounts for about one-third of cases in adolescents, it does not prevent all cases of meningococcal disease.

[YOUR SCHOOL SHOULD INSERT INFORMATION HERE ON THE AVAILABILITY AND COST OF THE VACCINE, INCLUDING AN INDICATOR OF WHETHER YOUR SCHOOL OFFERS MENINGOCOCCAL IMMUNIZATION SERVICES.]

I encourage you and your child to carefully review the enclosed materials. **Please complete the Meningococcal Vaccination Response Form and return it to** [YOUR SCHOOL SHOULD INSERT INFORMATION HERE ABOUT HOW AND WHEN THE FORM SHOULD BE RETURNED. NOTE: PER PUBLIC HEALTH LAW, NO INSTITUTION SHOULD PERMIT ANY STUDENT TO ATTEND THE INSTITUTION IN EXCESS OF 30 DAYS WITHOUT COMPLYING WITH THIS LAW. THE 30 DAY PERIOD MAY BE EXTENDED TO 60 DAYS IF A STUDENT CAN SHOW A GOOD FAITH EFFORT TO COMPLY.]

To learn more about meningitis and the vaccine, please feel free to contact [INSERT CONTACT INFORMATION HERE] and/or consult your child's physician. You can also find information about the disease at [LIST ADDITIONAL RESOURCES HERE, E.G., SCHOOL WEBSITE, NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH WEBSITE: WWW.HEALTH.STATE.NY.US, WEBSITE OF THE CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION (CDC): WWW.CDC.GOV/NCIDOD/DBMD/DISEASEINFO, ACHA'S WEBSITE: WWW.ACHA.ORG, ETC.].

Sincerely,

[INSERT NAME OF SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT]

[INSERT NAME OF RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL]