



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Department of Health

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October 7, 2008

The Honorable Phillip A. Hamilton
Chairman, House Committee on Health, Welfare and Institutions
Virginia House of Delegates
General Assembly Building, Room 701
Capitol Square
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Dear Chairman Hamilton:

This is to inform you that the annual *Code* review required of the State Board of Health by Section 32.1-46 F of the *Code of Virginia* has been completed. This section of the *Code*, effective July 1, 2006, requires that children be immunized in accordance with the immunization schedule developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academy of Family Physicians (*Recommended Childhood and Adolescent Immunization Schedule*). Also, this section states that vaccines required for school and day care attendance are those contained in the State Board of Health's *Regulations for the Immunization of School Children (Regulations)* and specifies those vaccines, at a minimum, that must be required by the *Regulations*.

Since our last review in August 2007, no significant changes in the *Recommended Childhood and Adolescent Immunization Schedule* have been made; none of the changes made would necessitate that revisions be made in the vaccines required for school and day care attendance as contained in the *Regulations*.

When we conducted the *Code* review last year, we noted that meningococcal vaccine had been added to the *Recommended Childhood and Adolescent Immunization Schedule*. At that time, we recommended that the stability of the meningococcal vaccine supply be monitored another year before considering adding that vaccine as a middle school requirement. Vaccine supply has stabilized, and adding meningococcal vaccine as a school requirement would be good public health practice. While many diseases include a component of life style choices, meningococcal disease is an equal opportunity pathogen whose incidence increases during

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adolescence. The administration of meningococcal vaccine to children 11-12 years of age is considered to be the optimal time to provide the vaccine and is consistent with national recommendations. Implementing this requirement will require an additional \$638,354 in state general funds annually.

Currently, two states have a middle school mandate for meningococcal vaccine and many Virginia colleges and the military already require it. According to Colleen Kraft, MD, President of the Virginia Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, most physician offices are immunizing children with meningococcal vaccine at the same time that they are giving the Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria and acellular pertussis) vaccine required for sixth grade entry. I realize that the current budget challenges will make supporting this recommendation difficult. Nevertheless, the use of this vaccine needs to become a key addition to our existing meningococcal disease prevention measures, and therefore I will be recommending to the State Board of Health that a middle school requirement for meningococcal vaccine be enacted in the coming year.

If you have questions or would like additional information, please contact Jim Farrell, Director, Division of Immunization, at (804) 864-8055 or via e-mail at james.farrell@vdh.virginia.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Karen Remley".

Karen Remley, MD, MBA, FAAP
State Health Commissioner