State school immunization deadline approaching; Students face suspension if not fully vaccinated

Norristown, PA (February 3, 2012) -- The Montgomery County Commissioners, along with the Montgomery County Health Department, are urging parents to make sure their children are up to date with their school immunizations. The deadline for compliance with the new immunization requirements is April 30th for most school districts. If students are not in compliance with the new requirements they can be suspended by the school district.

Changes to the school immunization requirements for vaccines took effect August 1, 2011. The changes were made to update the Pennsylvania school immunization requirements to more closely match recommendations by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). The changes affected students in grades K-12, with additional requirements for students entering 7th grade.

“As a parent of school-aged children, I understand how important it is to vaccinate your children,” said Josh Shapiro, chair of the county board of commissioners. “Immunizations protect our children, and I urge parents to meet this deadline. Our health department stands ready to assist in this effort.”

School nurses in Montgomery County are reporting that approximately 20% of students (nearly 21,000 students) are not up to date on immunizations. This could be due to under reporting of students’ vaccine status, but the county health department strongly urges parents to review their children’s records now to see if their child has the required vaccines and share the vaccine records with the school nurse so that the nurse will have an accurate assessment of their child’s immunization needs and can see which students are in compliance with the new guidelines. If unsure of their child’s vaccine record, parents can check with their physician or the school nurse to make sure their child is up to date on their vaccines.

Parents can avoid long lines and possible shortage of vaccine by reviewing their children’s vaccine status and getting the vaccine now. They can contact their healthcare provider to receive the vaccine, or if they do not have a family physician or health insurance they can contact one of the Health Department clinics to make an appointment. The numbers are: Norristown Health Center- 610-278-5145; Pottstown Health Center- 610-970-5040; Willow Grove Health Center- 215-784-5415.

The new vaccine requirements for attendance in all grades in 2011/2012 are:
• 4 doses of tetanus*
(1 dose on or after the 4th birthday)
• 4 doses of diphtheria*
(1 dose on or after the 4th birthday)
• 3 doses of polio
• 2 doses of measles**
• 2 doses of mumps**
• 1 dose of rubella (German measles)**
• 3 doses of hepatitis B
• 2 doses of varicella (chickenpox) vaccine or history of disease
*Usually given as DTP or DTaP or DT or Td
**Usually given as MMR

Additionally, children attending 7th grade in 2011/2012 need the following:

• 1 dose of tetanus, diphtheria, acellular pertussis (Tdap) (if 5 years has elapsed since last tetanus immunization)
• 1 dose of meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MCV)

Information about the new Pennsylvania immunization requirements was sent to health care providers and schools earlier this school year. For questions about school policies or health examinations, contact the local school system.

The full list of immunization requirements effective Aug. 1 for the 2011-2012 school year is available at:
http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/immunizations/14141/school_children_immunizations/557995
For general information about vaccines, visit the CDC website at http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/ or the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia website at http://www.chop.edu/service/vaccine-education-center/home.html.

For more information on the new requirements, residents should call the health department clinic nearest to them or visit the MCHD website at:

They can also be accessed on the Pennsylvania State Health Department website at:
http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/immunizations/14141/school_children_immunizations/557995