



Immunization Task Force (ITF)

Advocating for Immunizations

April 5, 2017

Dear :

We are writing on behalf of the Immunization Task Force – Metro Omaha (ITF) to remind you of important legal information pertinent to all Nebraska institutions of post-secondary education that provide on-campus housing for any portion of their student body. Find attached, a copy of the relevant 2003 state law (LB 513) that describes Nebraska mandated education by post-secondary schools about meningitis disease and vaccination.¹ This information is about the legal responsibility of such institutions to provide education (with confirmation of receipt and review), on meningococcal disease and the availability and effectiveness of vaccines to reduce risk of these potentially devastating diseases.

We have also contacted the senior administrator of your organization to provide them this information. We are enclosing a “toolkit” of materials intended to assist your institution in fulfilling this educational obligation (also made available electronically through our website: www.ImmunizeNebraska.org).

At the time the law was passed, vaccination was available only to prevent disease caused by Meningococcal Meningitis A/C/W/Y strains of meningococcal disease, which accounts for about 70-75% of the cases of this disease in college age adults.

In 2015, 2 new vaccines became available against Meningococcal meningitis type B, which accounts for about 30% of such cases. The type B strain of this disease has also been implicated in a number of highly publicized college campus outbreaks around the country. See a partial listing of outbreaks occurring at large and small campuses between 2013-2016, below:

- Princeton University
- University of California, Santa Barbara
- University of Oregon
- Providence College
- Santa Clara University

Source: The National Meningitis Foundation: <http://www.nmaus.org/disease-prevention-information/serogroup-b-meningococcal-disease/outbreaks/>

A news report on the Santa Clara, CA University outbreak stated that this institution, as did most outbreak institutions, held emergency vaccination clinics, “leaving parents confused and frustrated because they thought their children were already protected from the disease.”³ An earlier news report in the same paper, discussed parents’ concerns, “It freaks me out — it’s very scary,” and “...if, in fact, a vaccine could help, why didn’t I know about it?” according to one parent.⁴ (www.mercurynews.com/2016/02/05/why-isnt-new-meningitis-vaccine-universally-recommended/

Education and promotion of high immunization rates among this college population can reduce the human and financial costs that institutions may face if confronted with meningitis cases on their campus. In contrast to vaccine administration prior to college entry, emergency screening and vaccination clinic costs are often at least partially borne by the post-secondary institution. Such emergencies are also tremendously frightening to students and their families, as well as disruptive to the primary educational mission.

The Nebraska law mandating patient/parental education about meningococcal disease and vaccine, did not specify specific strains or vaccines for this disease. **It is our interpretation that this law may apply to all available meningococcal vaccine that are currently indicated for your student population.**

We hope that you find the enclosed “toolkit” of educational and documentation materials helpful in your educational efforts. We have provided a hard copy of each resource. We have created a “toolkit” page on our www.ImmunizeNebraska.org website (Resources tab – Education, College Meningitis), where you can find the electronic version of these materials, along with their source information. This webpage will also provide access links to video materials about meningococcal meningitis that you might want to provide as part of any website-based educational resources you offer your students and their families.

In summary, this communication is intended to provide you, as well as your university administrators information and assistance in meeting your legal obligation to your students and their families in this important area of disease prevention.

Do not hesitate to contact us if you should desire further information or guidance as you pursue compliance with provision of required information on meningococcal disease and vaccination. Thank you for your attention to our comments.

Sincerely, www.ImmunizeNebraska.org ;,

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Chair, Legislative Committee

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Immunization Task Force – Metro Omaha

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References:

1. Information on meningococcal disease; requirements. Laws 2003, LB 513.1. Chapter 85, Section 902. URL: <http://nebraskalegislature.gov/laws/statutes.php?statute=85-902>
2. Serogroup B meningococcal disease outbreaks on U.S. college campuses. National Meningitis Foundation. Retrieved on 1/26/17 from URL: <http://www.nmaus.org/disease-prevention-information/serogroup-b-meningococcal-disease/outbreaks/>
3. Santa Clara University meningitis survivor returns to school. Seipel T. The Mercury News. April 2, 2016. URL: <http://www.mercurynews.com/2016/04/02/santa-clara-university-meningitis-survivor-returns-to-school/>
4. Why isn't new meningitis vaccine universally recommended? Benson E and Seipel T. The Mercury News. February 5, 2016. URL: <http://www.mercurynews.com/2016/02/05/why-isnt-new-meningitis-vaccine-universally-recommended/>