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To: All Local Media

From: R. Joseph Ebel RS, MS, MBA, Health Commissioner

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NEWS RELEASE: Meningococcal Vaccine Protocol Adds Second Dose

Meningococcal disease is an infection that can cause swelling of the membranes covering the brain and spinal cord and is spread through exchange of mouth and throat secretions (via coughing or kissing). Meningitis comes in two forms, viral and bacterial. Teens more commonly are affected by bacterial, which can be very serious. Vaccines to protect against approximately 75% of the bacterial forms of Meningitis have been available for several years. Recent changes in the number of doses of Meningococcal vaccine a teen should receive were published by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) January 28, 2011. This new recommendation will improve the protection a child has from Meningococcal disease as a college freshman.

In recent years, Meningococcal vaccine was recommended to be given as a single dose between ages 11 and 18 years. Receiving it near 11 years of age was preferred for longer protection. New recommendations now suggest any child who received the vaccine **before** age 16 should receive a second dose between age 16 and 18 years of age. If a single dose is given at age 16 or older, a second dose is not recommended.

The Licking County Health Department would like to encourage parents of college freshmen to check their child's vaccine record and get re-vaccinated with Meningococcal vaccine if they qualify. College health records may only show spacing for one vaccine since this recommendation is relatively new, but getting the second dose is highly encouraged.

This vaccine is available at the Licking County Health Department as well as most physicians' offices. Getting to your provider before your child turns 19 is very important as eligibility for Vaccine for Children, a reduced cost vaccine program funded by Ohio Department of Health, ends once the child turns 19. Information concerning health department clinic locations, dates, and times are available at www.lickingcohealth.org or by calling 740-349-6535.

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