



**SENT VIA EMAIL**

April 3, 2019

Mr. Richard Woods, State School Superintendent  
Dr. Garry W. McGiboney, Deputy Superintendent External Affairs  
Georgia Department of Education  
205 Jesse Hill Jr. Drive, SE  
Atlanta, GA 30334

Dear Mr. Woods and Dr. McGiboney:

Meningococcal disease is a serious bacterial illness that affects the brain and the spinal cord in the form of meningitis, and the bloodstream in the form of septicemia. It can cause shock, coma, and death within hours of the first symptoms.

To help protect your students and others from meningococcal disease, Georgia law will soon require students be vaccinated against this disease unless the child has an exemption.

Effective July 1, 2020, children 16 years of age and older who are entering the 11<sup>th</sup> grade (including new entrants) must have received one booster dose of meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MCV4), unless their initial dose was administered on or after their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday.

If students have not been vaccinated against meningococcal disease, we strongly recommend they visit their doctor or health care provider to get their MCV4 booster shot. Getting MCV4 now will not only help protect students against the ongoing threat of meningitis but will also meet the new school entry requirement.

I ask that you share this important information with superintendents and school administrators. Together we can educate parents and encourage them to talk with their pediatrician or local health department about meningococcal and other vaccines their child may need, including:

- the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine series
- the tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis vaccine (Tdap or Td booster)
- an annual flu vaccine
- catch-up immunizations, including varicella, MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) and hepatitis B

Parents of students without health insurance or those whose health plan does not cover these vaccines, may call their local health department and ask about getting no or low

cost vaccines. For more information, visit <http://dph.georgia.gov/vaccines-children> or call (800)-848-3868.

Thank you for all that you do for Georgia students. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at [kathleen.toomey@dph.ga.gov](mailto:kathleen.toomey@dph.ga.gov) or 404-657-2703.

Sincerely,



Kathleen E. Toomey, M.D.,  
M.P.H. Commissioner & State  
Health Officer

cc: Sheila Lovett  
DPH Immunization Director