



## **New York State Correctional Officers & Police Benevolent Association, Inc.**

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**TO:** NYSCOPBA Chief Sector Stewards

**FROM:** Sharon Smith, Health Benefits Specialist

**DATE:** June 3, 2005

**RE:** Meningitis Vaccine/Empire Plan

NYSCOPBA was notified yesterday (6/2/05) that effective July 1, 2005, the meningitis vaccine will become a covered pediatric immunization under the Empire Plan for certain categories of children/young adults.

It has been the practice under the Empire Plan to add vaccines to the list of covered pediatric immunizations once the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the American Academy of Pediatrics adopts the recommendations of the CDC's vaccine advisory group. Several months ago, the advisory panel presented findings supporting the use of the meningitis vaccine for pre-teens ages 11 and 12, as well as high school/college students in dormitories; and on May 26, 2005, a joint statement was released by the CDC and the Academy of Pediatrics endorsing the recommendation. Since the addition of this benefit requires programming changes and physician communications, United Health-Care needs until July 1 to implement coverage.

Dependent children to age 19 and those in the targeted population will be eligible to receive the meningitis vaccine under both the participating provider and basic medical components of the Empire Plan. Full-time dependent students age 19 and over will be eligible for vaccine coverage under the adult immunization benefit which is through a participating provider only. In order for adequate supplies of the vaccine to be maintained, providers are being advised to vaccinate children ages 11, 12 and 17, as well as those college students in the identified risk group. Students in the 13 to 16 age range will receive the vaccine in subsequent years.

Vaccination at age 11 can protect children from the disease through college. However, since the vaccine is specific to certain strains of meningitis bacteria, it will not protect people from all meningococcal disease. Members should discuss the appropriateness of the vaccine for their children with their pediatrician.

Page 2

I would appreciate your help in getting this added benefit information to your membership. I receive many calls from members (some most recently) asking whether the vaccine is covered and I indicated it is not. Hopefully, by spreading the word, members will become aware of this added benefit and will wait until 7/1/05 to get their child vaccinated.

Thank you for your assistance in this regard; and should you have any questions, feel free to contact me.

cc: NYSCOPBA Joint Committee on Health Benefits  
NYSCOPBA Executive Board and Business Agents