Dear Children’s Camp Operator:

The purpose of this letter is to discuss vaccine-preventable diseases and vaccination in the camp setting. There has been an increase in the number of cases of vaccine-preventable diseases in the United States over the last several years, many of which have been linked to foreign travel or spread through children’s summer camps. In 2011, there has been an increase in cases of pertussis (whooping cough) in New York State, particularly among pre-teens and teens.

There is also a growing presence of international staff working at summer camps in New York State. These individuals provide a valuable contribution and enhance the camping experience. However, they may also introduce vaccine-preventable diseases that are endemic in their countries of origin. Measles continues to circulate in many European countries due to low levels of vaccination in these countries.

Measles, mumps, pertussis and varicella (chickenpox) are spread by direct contact or through coughing and sneezing and can be spread rapidly in camp settings. The best protection against vaccine-preventable diseases is broad vaccination coverage. Therefore, vaccination of all individuals who will be working in or attending summer camps is recommended.

Following is information regarding how to report vaccine-preventable diseases to the local health departments, and which vaccines are recommended for both campers and staff.

REPORTING DETAILS

Most vaccine-preventable diseases are reportable by law, and often even one case is considered an outbreak. The camp health director or other healthcare provider should discuss with staff the symptoms of vaccine-preventable diseases, especially pertussis and measles. The need to report the first sign of illness to the director should be stressed. If one of these diseases is suspected in even one camper or camp employee, your local health department (LHD) should be notified immediately. Delays in reporting have led to large outbreaks at camps.

If you or your health director are considering the diagnosis of a vaccine-preventable disease and are ordering testing, then you should report the case at that time. By notifying the LHD, as required, the LHD can facilitate obtaining rapid test results and institution of control measures, if indicated. (Camp operators must also report to the permit-issuing official. Medical providers should refer to New York State Department of Health Communicable Disease Reporting Requirements for reporting instructions, available at: http://www.health.ny.gov/forms/instructions/doh-389_instructions.pdf.)

RECOMMENDED IMMUNIZATIONS FOR CAMPERS

The part of the State Sanitary Code that applies to campers is Subpart 7-2, which requires that the camp maintain immunization records for all campers. It does not, however, require campers or staff to be vaccinated to attend camp.

Individual camp policy may choose to recommend or require specific immunizations of their campers. For the optimal health and safety of all campers and camp staff, the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) strongly recommends that all campers meet the age appropriate
immunization schedule as set forth by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP): http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/recs/schedules/child-schedule.htm and is enclosed for your reference.

At a minimum, campers should meet the same immunization requirements as school-aged children as indicated in Public Health Law (PHL) Article 21, Title 6, Section 2164. Refer to New York State Immunization Requirements for School Entrance/Attendance, available at: http://www.health.ny.gov/publications/2370.pdf and also included with this letter. In New York State, PHL Article 21, Title 6, Section 2167 also requires the notification of campers and parents about recommendations for and the availability of meningococcal vaccine for all campers attending overnight camps for a period of 7 days or more.

RECOMMENDED IMMUNIZATIONS FOR EMPLOYEES

Recommended immunizations, for all summer camp employees, including international staff, are based on the current recommendations of the ACIP. For further details and special circumstances, consult ACIP publications or the National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD) of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), accessible at http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/recs/acip/default.htm and included with this letter.

Immunizations that are routinely recommended, at a minimum, (if not already administered, a history of disease does not exist, or serology has not proven immunity) include:

- 2 measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine doses
- 1 tetanus, diphtheria, and acellular pertussis (Tdap) vaccine booster dose within the last 10 years, and
- 2 varicella vaccine doses.

Immunizations that are recommended for employees that have special requirements as described below include:

- Hepatitis B vaccine for employees with reasonably anticipated risk for exposure to blood or body fluids (e.g. health care workers, lifeguards) and
- Meningococcal vaccine for teens 11-18 years of age and for first year college students who live in dormitories.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For additional information on immunizations given in other countries or on immunizations in general, please call your local health department or the NYSDOH Bureau of Immunization at (518) 473 - 4437. More information can also be obtained at the NCIRD website at http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/. Communicable Disease Fact Sheets are available from the NYSDOH at: http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/.

Thank you for your efforts to keep camps free of vaccine-preventable disease.

Sincerely,

Debra Blog, M.D., M.P.H.
Director
Division of Epidemiology
Bureau of Immunization

Attachments:
2012 -13 NYS Immunization Requirements for School Entrance/Attendance
Recommended Immunization Schedule for Ages 0 – 6 years, US 2012
Recommended Immunization Schedule for Ages 7-18 years, US 2012
Recommended Adult Immunization Schedule, US 2012