



**S.B. 311**

127th General Assembly  
(As Introduced)

Sens. Cates, Fedor, D. Miller

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**BILL SUMMARY**

- Effective with the 2009 academic year, replaces the existing requirement that students seeking on-campus housing indicate whether they have been vaccinated against meningococcal meningitis and hepatitis B with a requirement that the students provide proof of vaccination.
- Expects from the new requirement any student for whom a waiver form is completed by the student, or if the student is a minor, the student's parent.
- Revises documentation requirements by making institutions of higher education responsible for providing students with waiver forms and eliminating the requirement that the Ohio Department of Health's web site include vaccination status forms.

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**CONTENT AND OPERATION**

**Background**

**Meningitis in college students**

Meningococcal meningitis is a rare but potentially fatal bacterial infection most commonly expressed either as meningitis, an attack of the brain and spinal cord, or meningococemia, an accumulation of the bacterium *Neisseria*

*meningitides* in the blood.<sup>1</sup> Unlike the less severe form of viral meningitis, bacterial meningococcal meningitis can be prevented by vaccine.<sup>2</sup>

Adolescents and young adults age 15-24 are at greatest risk of contracting meningococcal meningitis,<sup>3</sup> and studies show that lifestyle factors of freshmen college students living in dorms make them particularly vulnerable to the disease.<sup>4</sup> Meningococcal meningitis is extremely dangerous and progresses quickly, but symptoms are flu-like, and often confused for less serious illnesses. The earlier meningococcal meningitis is diagnosed and treated with antibiotics, the better chance for recovery. However, even with early diagnosis and treatment, the disease can cause loss of hearing, kidney damage, limb loss, and brain damage.<sup>5</sup>

### **Hepatitis B**

Hepatitis B is the most common serious liver infection. It is caused by the hepatitis B virus and is spread through contact with infected blood or body fluids that contain blood. Long-term effects of hepatitis B infection are cirrhosis or cancer of the liver. Infection is divided into two categories, acute and chronic. People at risk include those who have multiple sexual partners, live with an infected person, have tattoos or body piercings, or use intravenous drugs.<sup>6</sup> Hepatitis B infection can be prevented by vaccine.

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<sup>1</sup> "Meningococcal Disease," National Meningitis Association, *available at*: [http://www.nmaus.org/about\\_meningitis/index.htm](http://www.nmaus.org/about_meningitis/index.htm), last accessed April 4, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Telephone conversation with Julie Bellman, Program Consultant, Immunization Department in the Ohio Department of Health, April 7, 2008 (466-4643).

<sup>3</sup> "Meningitis," Mayo Clinic, *available at*: <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/meningitis/DS00118>, last accessed April 4, 2008.

<sup>4</sup> "Meningococcal Disease," National Meningitis Association, *available at*: [http://www.nmaus.org/about\\_meningitis/index.htm](http://www.nmaus.org/about_meningitis/index.htm), last accessed April 4, 2008.

<sup>5</sup> "Meningococcal Disease," Immunization Action Committee, *available at*: <http://www.vaccineinformation.org/menin/qandadis.asp>, last accessed April 4, 2008.

<sup>6</sup> "Hepatitis B," Hepatitis B Foundation, *available at*: <http://www.hepb.org/hepatitisbcd/modules/infectd/id450101/id459101g.html>, last accessed April 4, 2008.

## Vaccinations for students in on-campus housing

(R.C. 1713.55, 3332.25, and 3345.85)

Current law prohibits any state institution of higher education,<sup>7</sup> nonprofit institution of higher education,<sup>8</sup> or private career school<sup>9</sup> from allowing a student who has not submitted a meningococcal meningitis and hepatitis B vaccination status disclosure statement from residing in the institution's on-campus housing.<sup>10</sup> On receiving an application for residence in on-campus student housing, the institution or school must inform the student of the disclosure requirement and provide the student, in written or electronic form, a copy of the meningitis and hepatitis B vaccination status statement form from the Ohio Department of Health's web site or a comparable statement created by the institution or school that meets the requirements for the Department's statement.

For academic years starting after June 30, 2009, the bill eliminates the existing requirement and requires instead that students applying for residence in on-campus housing of state and nonprofit institutions of higher education and private career schools provide documentation or medical certification that the student has been vaccinated against meningococcal meningitis and hepatitis B.<sup>11</sup> The institution is required to (1) inform the student or minor student's parent of the vaccination requirement, (2) provide the information available from the Ohio Department of Health's web site regarding meningitis and hepatitis B in either written or electronic form (see Ohio Department of Health's responsibilities,

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<sup>7</sup> "State institution of higher education" means any state university or college, community college, state community college, university branch established under the law, or technical college. R.C. 3345.011.

<sup>8</sup> "Nonprofit institution of higher education" or "institution" means a nonprofit college, university, or other institution that offers instruction in the arts and sciences, business administration, engineering, philosophy, literature, fine arts, law, medicine, nursing, social work, theology, and other recognized academic and professional fields of study, and awards degrees for fulfilling requirements of academic work beyond high school. R.C. 1713.55.

<sup>9</sup> "Private career school" or "school" means a person possessing a certificate of registration and one or more program authorizations. R.C. 3332.01.

<sup>10</sup> "On-campus housing" means a dormitory or other student residence that is owned or operated by or located on the campus of an institution of higher education. R.C. 1713.55, 3332.25, and 3345.85.

<sup>11</sup> The bill does not indicate what the nature of the documentation or medical certification will be, nor does it require a standardized form. Presumably, each institution or school will determine acceptable documentation or adopt medical certification guidelines.

below), and (3) inform the student or parent that the requirement can be waived for religious or medical reasons.

**Waivers**

(R.C. 1713.55, 3332.25, and 3345.85)

The bill requires that each institution of higher education and private career school provide a waiver form for the vaccination requirement to any student or parent that requests it. The form is to include a statement for the student or parent to acknowledge having received and read the information available from the Department of Health's web site regarding meningitis and hepatitis B and a statement that the student or parent has chosen for religious or medical reasons not to have the student vaccinated against meningococcal meningitis or hepatitis B, or both.

On receiving a signed waiver form, the institution or school is required to waive the vaccination requirement.

**Ohio Department of Health's responsibilities**

(R.C. 3701.133)

Under current law, the Ohio Department of Health is required make available on its web site information about the risks associated with meningococcal meningitis and hepatitis B and the availability and effectiveness of vaccines.

The Department also must provide on its web site, in a format suitable for downloading, a meningitis and hepatitis B vaccination status statement form for a student applying for residence in on-campus housing, or a minor student's parent, to complete to disclose whether the student has been vaccinated against meningococcal meningitis and hepatitis B.

The bill maintains the requirement that the Department make information available on its web site regarding meningococcal meningitis and hepatitis B, but eliminates the requirement that the web site include the status statement form.

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**HISTORY**

ACTION	DATE
Introduced	03-27-08
S0311-I-127.doc/jc	

