



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SENIOR SERVICES

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Governor

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HEATHER HOWARD  
Commissioner

February 13, 2008

Dear Healthcare Provider:

We are writing to inform you of an incident in a pediatric practice in Toms River that may have an impact on children under your care. In early January 2008, the Toms River Police Department notified Ocean County Health Department (OCHD), which subsequently advised the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services (NJDHSS) that they had received a complaint about a Dr. Jose Romillo, a local pediatrician with regard to his pediatric vaccination practice and his regulated medical waste disposal procedures. An investigation is still pending at the Toms River Police Department and any questions concerning that investigation should be directed to the Police Department. The OCHD and NJDHSS' involvement was focused on the potential impact on public health. Dr. Romillo is no longer engaged in the practice of medicine and patients under his care have been directed to other healthcare providers, including possibly you.

Consistent with our authority as healthcare oversight agencies, OCHD and NJDHSS completed a thorough examination of Dr. Romillo's records to review vaccination practices and medical waste disposal. This examination included review and abstraction of nearly 1,100 individual patient charts. Based on the examination, NJDHSS and OCHD have concluded that patients in the practice received expired vaccines and, as a result, are considered to be inadequately immunized.

Because of incomplete and largely illegible medical records, OCHD and NJDHSS have been unable to determine what proportion of Dr. Romillo's patients might have been inappropriately vaccinated and therefore might not be adequately immunized. As a result, OCHD and NJDHSS are recommending that all of Dr. Romillo's patients who received one or more vaccines from Dr. Romillo since 1999 be revaccinated as soon as possible.

With the assistance of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), NJDHSS has prepared Guidance on Revaccination Schedules ("Guidance") for these patients. This Guidance is based on several sources, including the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) guidelines for regular pediatric vaccination, adult vaccination, and pediatric catch-up vaccination. In addition, the Guidance accounts for minimum and maximum patient age requirements in compliance with the FDA-approved vaccine label.

Please reference the attached Guidelines including an instruction sheet and tables for guidelines based on the age of the patients. The tables are constructed to begin with the first series of repeat vaccines that you may have to give the child. There are two sets of instructions on how to interpret the tables, based on whether the patient has documentation of having received one or more vaccines in a given series from a source other than Dr. Romillo, such as the local health department, a clinic, or a previous healthcare provider. We have also provided examples illustrating some of the anticipated scenarios that health providers might encounter.

Please note that it is not necessary to exclude any of these children from school during the revaccination process according to the regulations set forth at N.J.A.C. 8:57-4, "Immunization of Pupils in School." In addition, Medicaid and most health insurance plans have agreed to reimburse healthcare providers for professional fees and consumables associated with revaccination. Healthcare providers and members who have difficulty in having revaccination claims paid should contact the Department of Banking and Insurance at 1-800-446-7467. The NJDHSS will provide VFC vaccines for VFC-eligible children through normal vaccine-ordering channels.

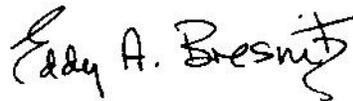
Due to the complexity of properly revaccinating such a diverse population of patients, we anticipate that there will be questions about how to interpret this Guidance. The NJDHSS Communicable Disease Service (609-588-7500) is available to provide consultation and assistance with interpreting the Guidelines as needed. Parents and caregivers with concerns may continue to contact the OCHD hotline at 732-341-9700, x7604.

Please call with any questions or concerns, and we thank you in advance for your assistance in protecting your patients and the public's health.

Thank you,



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Ocean County Health Department



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