



KANSAS BOARD OF REGENTS

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STATE UNIVERSITIES TO REQUIRE MENINGITIS VACCINE

Board of Regents Approves New Policy to Protect Kansas Students

(TOPEKA) – Today the Kansas Board of Regents announced that it has adopted a new policy aimed at strengthening student health on the six state university campuses. The new policy, effective from the start of the 2006-2007 academic year (beginning with the Fall 2006 academic semester), requires the six state universities to establish policies and procedures that will require all incoming students residing in university housing to be vaccinated for meningitis or to sign a waiver indicating that they refuse to take the vaccine.

“With this policy, the Board has taken an important step to protect the health and the lives of Kansas students,” said Reginald L. Robinson, President and CEO of the Kansas Board of Regents. “The Board urges all higher education institutions in the state to consider what can be done on their campuses to protect a vulnerable student population from this dangerous disease.”

“Protecting the health of all Kansans is vital and taking these steps to prevent a devastating illness from afflicting Kansas college students is an important part of our effort,” added Governor Kathleen Sebelius. “If our actions prevent even one student from falling ill, then it will have been worthwhile.”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued a recommendation in May that, among other things, calls for all college freshmen living in dormitories to receive the newly licensed meningitis vaccine. In a May 26 press release, the CDC stated that “college freshmen living in the close quarters of dormitories are at a higher risk for meningococcal disease compared with peers the same age who are not attending college.”

“For a number of years now the Board and the Governor have strongly urged higher education institutions in the state to increase student awareness about the dangers of this life-threatening disease,” said Robinson. “However, once the CDC issued a new meningitis recommendation, the Board felt strongly that it should take a more aggressive approach to combating this potentially fatal disease.”

Four state universities (Emporia State University, Fort Hays State University, the University of Kansas, and Wichita State University) currently require some students to either receive the meningitis vaccine or to sign a waiver indicating that they do not wish to receive it. Two state universities (Kansas State University and Pittsburg State University) currently encourage students to receive the vaccine, promote awareness among students about the health

risks associated with meningitis, and make meningitis vaccinations available on campus, but do not require students to receive the vaccine.

The Board's meningitis policy (approved September 15): "Effective from the start of the 2006-07 academic year, all of the state universities shall have in place policies and procedures requiring that all incoming students residing in university housing be vaccinated for meningitis. Such policies shall include appropriate waiver procedures for those who refuse to take the vaccine."

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