

OUR LADY OF VICTORIES SCHOOL

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Dear Parents and Guardians,

The NJ State Department of Health and Senior Services passed some changes in the immunization requirements on January 7, 2008, which became effective as of September, 2008. These changes specifically affect **each upcoming class as the children enter the Sixth Grade, and those children aged 6 to 59 months entering our Early Childhood Programs (Pre-K 3 & Pre-K 4)**. Therefore, I would like to update you now, to allow everyone the necessary time to make sure your son or daughter is up to date with his/her **mandatory** immunizations when needed.

For those students born on or after January 1, 1997, there are two changes **as they enter Grade 6**: first, documentation of having received one dose of a Meningococcal-containing vaccine (Menactra) after their 11th birthday. This same age group will also need **one** dose of Tdap (Tetanus, diphtheria, and acellular pertussis vaccine) to be given five years after his/her last DTP/DTaP or Td dose (this previous dose *usually* refers to the four-year-old booster required for Kindergarten entry, unless an additional dose was given due to injury or travel requirements).

The other two changes pertain to all children aged 12 through 59 months entering our Early Childhood Programs (Pre-K 3 & Pre-K 4). All students must have received at least one dose of Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine (e.g. Prevnar) after his/her first birthday. This age group will also be required to receive at least one dose of seasonal influenza vaccine between September 1st and December 31st each year.

These diseases can hold serious consequences and are all **preventable**. The changes are being made to make our schools a safe place to be. **So don't let all the initials overwhelm you**. Basically, they've lowered the age requirement for the meningococcal vaccine (routine in the past for college-bound students) and added the pertussis (whooping cough) dose back into the usual tetanus/diphtheria booster due at that age. The pneumococcal vaccine has been routinely given for a substantial number of years and flu vaccines have been strongly advocated for this age group for several years, too. It's just a matter of these doses now being required by the State of New Jersey for school attendance, rather than at the routine recommendation of your pediatrician.

Please note: according to the officials at the NJ State Vaccine Preventable Disease Program, there will be **no grace period** for re-entry in September/January. I would therefore encourage you to check now with your pediatrician and make the necessary arrangements as soon as convenient **so that your child will meet the requirements and be able to return to school in September/January. Please contact me if you have any questions regarding these changes. *Your child may very well have already received some or all of the needed immunizations, but I simply need to have them on file.*** In that case, all that is necessary is for you to forward a current copy of the dates to my Office. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Sharyn Ross, RN