LOCAL NEWS

New state rule requires whooping cough, meningitis shots for seventh-graders

BY EMILY GEDDE
Staff Writer

The countdown is on until the 2014-2015 school year begins Tuesday, but before seventh-grade students can begin attending classes at Falls High School, they need to be up-to-date on their immunizations.

According to a post last week by Sue Palm, school nurse, on the Independent School District No. 361 Facebook page, 35 students are short of one or more of the state-required immunizations. Until they get their shots, they cannot start school.

"We're guessing a large chunk of those students have received their immunizations, they just haven't got the documentation to us yet," said Falls Superintendent Kevin Grover. "But it is a requirement we have that they will need to have this taken care... We appreciate the cooperation we receive from families. We want kids here. We don't want to turn them away."

This year, a new state rule requires students entering seventh grade to show they've received the T-dap vaccine for tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis, or whooping cough, as well as a bacterial meningitis vaccine. Students in eighth through 12th grades must show proof of vaccine at the school's request.

The new requirements, according to the Minnesota Department of Heath, were approved by Gov. Mark Dayton in 2013 to bring the state into line with recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and other public health groups. Nancy Lee, Koochiching County Public Heath and Human Services, said the timing of vaccines is due to the age at which most disease is being seen and the longevity of the vaccine coverage.

"Children get meningococcal vaccine in their childhood vaccine schedule and it has been determined that a bosser is needed around age 12," she said. "For a number of years, students going into seventh grade need to have a Td booster. That requirement has been changed to T-dap to take into account the increase in pertussis disease."

Pertussis disease, or whooping cough, is a highly-contagious disease that affects the lungs. Pertussis bacteria are spread from person to person through the air. A person with pertussis develops a severe cough that usually lasts four to six weeks or longer. The disease can be very serious, especially in infants.

Minnesota saw an increase of pertussis in 2012 with 4,639 reported cases, according to state health records. Lee said the Minnesota Department of Health contacts local agencies when infectious diseases like whooping cough are reported.

"MDH did contact public health a few years ago, but we have not received contact this year," she said.

Requiring students to get vaccinated will hopefully cut down on contagious diseases spreading.

"Since these diseases are communicable and the nature of students being in close proximity, it is important that students be vaccinated," Lee said of whooping cough, meningitis and other diseases. "Communicable diseases are out there. Thankfully, we don't see much incidence and possibly that is why some have become complacent or have decided immunizations aren't important. The challenge with that thought is people – kids and adults – still die from diseases that can be prevented with these vaccines. It is important to keep getting vaccinated to keep the incidence of disease as low as possible."

Lee added even adults, especially those around infants, should receive the T-dap vaccine.

"It has been determined that adults who have pertussis may not know they have it and pass it along to infants who haven't been able to get their full schedule of the vaccine," she said. "Some of these infants are dying from pertussis. An adult keeping their vaccine coverage up-to-date truly is protecting the little ones they are around."

Exemptions

Both Lee and Grover acknowledged there are parents and guardians who choose to forgo getting their students immunized for medical, religious or other reasons.

"(Parents) can wave that right," Grover said.

To do so, a conscientious exemption form must be filled out and turned into school administration. The form is available at both the Falls Elementary and Falls High School offices, Grover said.

Programs to help

Vaccines are available through a family's regular medical provider or the public health department, depending on insurance coverage, Lee said.

"If parents don't have insurance to pay for vaccinations, there is a program called Minnesota Vaccine for Children that will pay," she said. "Parents can call their clinic or public health if they have questions about coverage under the program."

Funds available for some homeowners, rental owners affected by June flooding

Minnesota Housing loan programs offer up to $70,000 in assistance

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

Some Koochiching County residents affected by June flooding may be eligible for state loans up to $70,000 through Minnesota Housing.

Funds are for capital improvements that return the home to pre-disaster or comparable condition. The program includes property in Koochiching, Marshall, Roseau, Lake of the Woods, Beltrami, Todd and Wadena counties, plus Bois Forte and Red Lake Bands of Chippewa.

The Headwaters Regional Development Commission is administering this program for Koochiching County and property woners need only call to make application.

Two loan programs available:

- Community Fix Up flood loans can provide up to $50,000 in repair funding for residents with qualifying credit. The interest rate for these loans has been reduced to 3 percent.
- For residents who do not qualify for a Community Fix Up loan, or those who have flood repair needs beyond what is covered by the Community Fix Up loan, the Quick Start Disaster Recovery Program can provide additional assistance up to $20,000. Quick Start loans are interest free and forgiven if the owner remains in the home for 10 years. Funding for rental housing properties is also available under similar terms and conditions.

"These programs are critical resources for people who experienced this year's flood damage," said Mary Tingerthal, Minnesota Housing commissioner. "I encourage property owners in affected areas to contact our lender partners to learn more."

To be eligible for loans, residents in the declared counties and tribal areas must first contact their insurance company. Only damages that are not covered by insurance can qualify.

"The HRDC (Headwaters Regional Development Commission) is proud to partner with Minnesota Housing to bring disaster relief programs to Greater Minnesota, said Jackie Meixner, HRDC staff. "If you were affected by the 2014 flooding, we encourage you to contact us to determine if any of our products are a fit for your household." Contact Meixner at 218-333-6530 or via email at jmeixner@hrdc.org to inquire about HRDC programs!

The application deadline for both loan programs is Oct. 24. Eligible residents in the above counties and tribal bands should contact the local administrator, Headwaters RDC, to learn more and apply contact Headwaters RDC, 403 4th Street Northwest, Suite 310, Bemidji, MN 56601; 218-333-6530.

Minnesota Housing finances affordable housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income Minnesotans. Find out more at www.mnhousing.gov, and follow it at www.facebook.com/minnesotahousing and on Twitter @mnhousing.

More information

Funds are avaiable for only a short period of time, according to an HRDC news release. All applications must be received at the HRDC office no later than Oct. 1. Contact HRDC, 403 4th Street Northwest, Suite 310, Bemidji, MN 56601; 218-333-6530.

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• Body Wash • Body Lotion • Body Butter

imagine. discover. begin.
This clean, fresh fragrance opens with crisp white cotton and ocean notes. The middle emerges with a floral burst of blue freesia and jasmine, accented with green pear. It finishes with a fusion of ocean, musk, sandalwood, vanilla and amber.

smile. wish. believe.
This energetic fragrance opens with invigorating top notes of juniper and pineapple. The middle emerges softly with peony and freesia, counterbalanced with violet leaf and neroli. It dries down with vetiver, sandalwood and musk.
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