



ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON

Archdiocesan Pastoral Center: 5001 Eastern Avenue, Hyattsville, MD 20782-3447
Mailing Address: Post Office Box 29260, Washington, DC 20017-0260
301-853-4500 TDD 301-853-5300

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Vicar General
and Moderator of the Curia
Phone: 301-853-4520
Fax: 301-853-5346

Re: Immunization information for parents of girls entering sixth grade
in archdiocesan schools in the District of Columbia

Dear Parents,

As you may be aware, the District of Columbia government issued new immunization requirements for students, which took effect in School Year 2009-2010. To implement the new requirements, the District issued a standard immunization form, which is part of the "District of Columbia Universal Health Certificate."

As parents of a rising sixth-grade female student in our Catholic schools, you should know that the District of Columbia Universal Health Certificate allows space for documentation of the Human Papillomavirus ("HPV") Vaccine, which may be administered by your daughter's physician.¹ While the language of the law describes the change as the "HPV vaccination requirement" you should also know that parents are entitled to "opt out" of the HPV Vaccination for any reason.

The Archdiocese of Washington believes that the primary responsibility for the medical decision of whether or not to vaccinate a young woman against HPV rests with her parents. Your discretion in making this decision with your daughter is critical and should be based on your own well-informed judgment.

In addition to the information provided by the District of Columbia regarding HPV, the Archdiocese would like the parents in its Catholic schools to have access to some consideration of the vaccine against HPV in light of Catholic teaching. As you know from our previous communications regarding the Archdiocesan Immunization Policy, the Church teaches that generally immunizing against disease is a morally responsible action that is important to sustaining the health of our communities. Likewise, there is nothing intrinsically immoral associated with providing or receiving the HPV vaccine. In fact, the National Catholic Bioethics Center issued a statement on vaccination against HPV on July 11, 2006.

¹ The law in the District of Columbia found at DCMR 22-146 states:

146.1 Beginning with the 2009/2010 school year, a female student enrolling in grade six (6) for the first time shall receive the first dose of HPV vaccine at age eleven (11) and by age twelve (12).

146.2 The second dose of HPV vaccine shall be administered not less than four (4) weeks after the first two (2) months after the first dose.

146.3 A third dose of HPV vaccine shall be administered not less than twelve (12) weeks after the second dose and by six (6) months after the first dose.

146.4 The parent or legal guardian of a student required to receive a vaccine under this section may opt out of the vaccination for any reason by signing a form provided by the Department that states that the parent or legal guardian has been informed of the HPV vaccination requirement and has elected not to participate.

It stated the following, which is available at <http://www.ncbcenter.org>:

The National Catholic Bioethics Center notes that the Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices has recommended that young women be vaccinated against the human papilloma virus (HPV) as a protection against cervical cancer, which is caused by certain strains of this virus. HPV is spread through sexual contact which includes, but is not limited to, sexual intercourse. Consequently, the most effective way to avoid contracting it is to abstain from sexual relations before marriage and to remain faithful within marriage.

The NCBC considers HPV vaccination to be a morally acceptable method of protecting against this disease, but asks that civil authorities leave this decision to parents and not make such immunization mandatory.

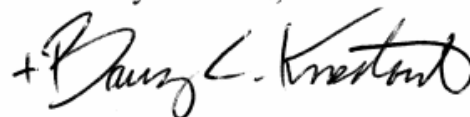
The prevalence of HPV in the reproductive age population makes exposure to the virus possible, even in a monogamous marriage, due to the possibility of a spouse's exposure prior to marriage. Furthermore, we live in a society where non-consensual sex remains a threat to young women who deserve to be protected from the effects of exposure to HPV.

However, as the *Catholic Medical Association Position Paper on HPV Immunization* provides, the HPV vaccine "can help to address one consequence of the spread of HPV, i.e., cervical cancer. At the same time, to best promote the health and happiness of adolescents, physicians, parents and social institutions should redouble their efforts to promote chastity. Consistent messages about and support for this virtue will not only help to reduce disease, but will help individuals, couples, and marriages to flourish."

The Church teaches that parents are the primary caregivers of their children. Because each child is unique, the medical decision regarding the HPV vaccination for your daughter should be made through careful consideration of the medical, ethical and practical information available to your family.

This information is provided in the hope that it might be helpful as you and your daughters make this medical decision.

Faithfully in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Barry C. Knestout". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Barry C. Knestout
Moderator of the Curia

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Department of Health**



Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Annual Vaccination Opt-Out Certificate

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING THIS FORM

Section 1: Enter student information

Section 2: Have parent/guardian or student (if 18 years of age or older) sign and date after reading the HPV Information Statement.

| Section 1: Student Information | | | |
|--|-------|----------------|--------|
| Name of School | | | |
| Student Name: | | Date of Birth: | Grade: |
| Street Address: | City: | Zip Code: | Phone: |
| Name and Address of Healthcare Provider: | City: | Zip Code: | Phone: |

Beginning in 2009 and in accordance with D.C. Law 17-10 (Human Papillomavirus Vaccinations and Reporting Act of 2007) and the December 19, 2014 Notice of Rulemaking to expand Title 22 of the DC Municipal Regulations, the parent or legal guardian of a student enrolling in grades 6 through 12 for the first time at a school in the District of Columbia is required to submit certification that the student has:

1. Received the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine; or
2. Not received the HPV vaccine this school year because:
 - a. The parent or guardian has objected in good faith and in writing to the chief official of the school that the vaccination would violate his or her religious beliefs;
 - b. The student's physician, his or her representative or the public health authorities has provided the school with written certification that the vaccination is medically inadvisable; or
 - c. The parent or legal guardian, in his or her discretion, has elected to opt out of the HPV vaccination program by signing a declaration that the parent or legal guardian has been informed of the HPV vaccination requirement and has elected not to participate.

Section 2: Signatures

Annual Opt-Out for Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Vaccine

I have received and reviewed the information provided on HPV and the benefits of the HPV vaccine in preventing cervical cancer and genital warts if it is given to preteen girls and boys. After being informed of the risk of contracting HPV and the link between HPV and cervical cancer, other cancers and genital warts, I have decided to opt-out of the HPV requirement for the above named student. I know that I may readdress this issue at any time and complete the required vaccinations.

Signature of Parent/Guardian or Student if >18 years

Date

Print Name of Parent/Guardian or Student if >18 years

HUMAN PAPILLOMAVIRUS INFORMATION

Genital human papillomavirus (HPV) is the most common sexually transmitted virus in the United States. There are about 100 types of HPV. Most infections don't cause any symptoms and go away on their own. HPV is important mainly because it can cause cervical cancer in women and several less common types of cancer in both men and women. It can also cause genital warts and warts of the upper respiratory tract. There is no cure for HPV, but the problems it causes can be treated.

About 20 million people in the U.S. are infected, and about 6 million more get infected each year. HPV is usually spread through sexual contact. More than 50% of sexually active men and women are infected with HPV at some time in their lives. Every year in the U.S., about 12,000 women get cervical cancer and 4,000 die from it with rates of cervical cancer in DC being higher than national averages.

HPV vaccine is an inactivated vaccine (not live) which protects against four major types of HPV. These include two types that cause about 70% of cervical cancer and 2 types that cause about 90% of genital warts. HPV vaccine can prevent most genital warts and most cases of cervical cancer.

Protection is expected to be long-lasting. But vaccinated women still need cervical cancer screening because the vaccine does not protect against all HPV types that cause cervical cancer.

HPV vaccine is routinely recommended for girls and boys 11-12 years of age, but may be given as early as age 9 years. It is important for girls and boys to get HPV vaccine before their first sexual contact-because they have not been exposed to HPV. The vaccine protects against some – but not all – types of HPV. However, if female or male is already infected with a type of HPV, the vaccine will not prevent disease from that type. It is still recommended that females and males with HPV get vaccinated. In addition, the HPV vaccine can prevent vaginal and vulvar cancer in females, and genital warts and anal cancer in both males and females.

The vaccine is also recommended for females 13-26 years of age and males 13-21 years of age (or to age 26 in some cases) who did not receive it when they were younger. It may be given with any other vaccines needed.

HPV vaccine is given as a three-dose series:

- **1st Dose: Now**
- **2nd Dose: two months after Dose 1**
- **3rd Dose: six months after Dose 1**

People who have had a life-threatening allergic reaction to yeast, are pregnant, moderate to severe illness should not receive the vaccine. Side effects are mostly mild, including itching, pain, redness at the injection site and a mild to moderate fever.

If additional information is needed, please contact your healthcare provider, the D.C. Department of Health Immunization Program at (202) 576-7130 or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636).