



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
**WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH**

*PO Box 47990 • Olympia, Washington 98504-7990*

January 14, 2009

**TO:** Washington State Board of Health Members

**FROM:** Dr. Patricia Ortiz, SBOH Member

**SUBJECT:** BRIEFING ON PROPHYLACTIC TREATMENT TO PREVENT  
OPHTHALMIA NEONATORUM, WAC 246-100-202

**Background and Summary**

WAC 246-100-202(1) lists the duties of health care providers related to sexually transmitted diseases. The rule specifies that those attending or assisting in births must treat infants' eyes to prevent ophthalmia neonatorum, a condition caused by gonococcal infection that can cause blindness if left untreated. Most states require this prophylactic treatment because it has great potential benefits, and it is safe, easy to administer, and inexpensive.

The current rule references an outdated Department of Social and Health Services policy statement issued in 1981. This policy statement lists a prophylactic treatment regimen that is no longer recommended by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Academy of Pediatrics. On November 25, 2008, the Board filed a CR-101 to initiate rule making. The rule revision will address the outdated protocol, as well as some issues concerning opt-out provisions that have surfaced since the Board last modified the rule.

Today you will have an opportunity to learn more about the purpose of this proposed rule change, potential changes to the rule, the scope of the problem (including the epidemiology) and the rule timeline. We have invited Bat-Sheva Stein from the Maternal Child Health program at the Department of Health (DOH) and Julie Simon from the Sexually Transmitted Disease Surveillance Program at DOH to present this information to you.

**Recommended Board Action**

None.