**Sample Letter Meningococcal Disease Awareness**

[INSERT DATE]

Dear Parent or Guardian:

As a parent there is nothing more important than safeguarding your child’s health. The Washington State Legislature requires us to make information available to all parents of 6th through 12th grade students about meningococcal disease and how to prevent it.

**Meningococcal Disease and Prevention**

Meningococcal disease is a serious illness. It spreads through close contact by coughing, kissing, or sharing anything by mouth. This includes sharing items like water bottles, eating utensils, lip balm, or toothbrushes. It can cause pneumonia, blood infections, and the swelling of the covering of the brain and spinal cord (called meningitis). Severe disease can cause brain damage, loss of hearing or limbs, and death. Fortunately, this life-threatening infection is rare. Washington state usually has 20 to 30 reported cases of meningococcal disease each year. Adolescents and young adults are more likely to get meningococcal disease, especially if they live in group settings like college dorms or join the military.

There are three types of vaccines that protect against several kinds of meningococcal disease.

**Meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MCV4)**

MCV4 protects your child against the four most common types of bacteria that cause disease. MCV4 is a routine recommendation for all children aged 11 to 12 years, with a booster dose for teens aged 16 to 18. Teens who did not get their first dose at the right time should get it as soon as possible. Teens with high-risk conditions like weak immune systems may need more doses.

**Meningococcal B vaccine (MenB)**

MenB protects against most meningococcal B bacteria. It may be given to teens and adults aged 16 to 23 who have rare health conditions, who are at increased risk during a meningococcal B disease outbreak, or based on shared decision making with your health care provider.

**Pentavalent meningococcal vaccine (MenABCWY)**
MenABCWY vaccine protects against five types of meningococcal disease. It is used when someone can receive both the MenB and MCV4 vaccines at the same visit.

**Where can I find the Meningococcal vaccine?**

Ask your doctor, nurse, or local health department to find out more about meningococcal vaccines and where you can get them. Washington state provides all recommended vaccines at no cost for children and adolescents 18 years of age and younger through the Childhood Vaccine Program. Find providers in the Childhood Vaccine Program using the following web link: <https://fortress.wa.gov/doh/vaccinemap/>.

**Learn more about meningococcal disease and how to prevent it:**

* Washington State Department of Health meningococcal information: <https://doh.wa.gov/you-and-your-family/illness-and-disease-z/meningitis-meningococcal-disease>
* CDC meningococcal disease and vaccine information: <https://www.cdc.gov/meningococcal/vaccines/>

Sincerely,

[INSERT NAME AND TITLE]