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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February-May 2009 Vaccinate Before You Graduate Months

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the Society of Adolescent Medicine recommend that all 11-18 year olds get a preteen or adolescent check-up. During the childhood years, the number of doctor visits decline dramatically, so the preteen and adolescent doctor visits are key to a healthy start for this population. It's also a perfect opportunity to discuss other preventive measures such as eating right, staying active, and handling peer pressure. In addition, the complete, recommended immunization schedule should be promoted to ensure protection from all vaccine preventable diseases.

“Protecting the health of San Bernardino County’s youth is one of our most urgent priorities,” said Dr. Maxwell Ohikhuare. “Vaccinate Before You Graduate Months is part of our commitment to ensure our kids receive all the benefits immunizations can provide.”

The federal Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) now recommends that 11-18 year olds receive the following immunizations:

- **Meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MCV4)** protects against certain types of invasive meningococcal disease, a serious disease that causes meningitis. This vaccine is highly recommended for college bound students.
- **Tetanus booster (Tdap)** protects against tetanus, diphtheria, and whooping cough (pertussis). Preteens and adolescents can act as reservoirs of disease and can transmit vaccine preventable disease to others, especially their younger siblings.
- **HPV three-dose series for girls** prevents cervical cancer in adulthood. This immunization is also recommended for young women up to 26 years of age who have not been previously vaccinated or haven't completed the three-dose series.
- **Two doses of varicella (chickenpox) vaccine** for all children over 4 years of age who have not had the disease. Children 12 years of age and younger should receive the two-dose series separated by a minimum of 3 months; all persons 13 years of age and older without evidence of varicella immunity should receive the two-dose series separated by a minimum of 4 weeks.
- **Influenza immunization** is now recommended for all adolescents up to their 19th birthday. ACIP emphasizes that influenza vaccine should continue to be offered throughout the influenza season; flu activity in the United States generally peaks after the New Year.

If your preteen or adolescent does not have health insurance, or is only partially insured, ask your doctor or local health department about getting low cost vaccines. Please visit the San Bernardino Public Health website at www.sbcounty.gov/dph for low cost clinics in San Bernardino County (click on Public Health Clinics located at the top left corner and go to Immunization Clinics) or call the Immunization Program at 1-800-722-4794 for assistance, Monday through Friday from 8 AM to 5 PM. In addition, please visit www.csno.org under adolescent resources for more information about the campaign and materials.

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