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### **State campaign promotes HPV vaccine to area families**

NORTHWEST MICHIGAN – The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services is stepping up its efforts to alert teens and their parents about the need for vaccination against the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) and other preventable diseases. HPV vaccine is recommended to prevent cervical and other cancers.

MDHHS is sending letters to the parents of adolescents in the state aged 11-18 years who are overdue to get their first dose of HPV vaccine. Joshua Meyerson, M.D., Medical Director for the Health Department of Northwest Michigan, said the Health Department understands parents may have questions upon receiving the letters.

“We support the State’s efforts to alert parents and teens of the benefit from the HPV vaccine and other immunizations,” Dr. Meyerson said. “The HPV vaccine is safe and effective, and should be recommended to both girls and boys.”

Nearly 80 million Americans are currently infected with HPV, and an additional 14 million are infected every year. Half of those newly infected with HPV are between the ages of 15 and 24. HPV infection is the main cause of cervical cancer and can also lead to other cancers in males and females as well as being the primary source of genital warts.

Dr. Meyerson explained that the HPV vaccine is most effective when given at 11 to 12 years of age because that’s when the body produces the greatest immune response and, like all vaccine-preventable diseases, it is best to receive the vaccine before there is risk of exposure. The vaccine provides long-term protection following completion of the three-dose series.

Parents who receive the MDHHS letter should contact their family physician or the Health Department with any questions, or to schedule an immunization appointment. Health Department immunization appointments may be scheduled by calling (800) 432-4121.

The Health Department of Northwest Michigan is mandated by the Michigan Public Health Code to promote wellness, prevent disease, provide quality healthcare, address health problems of vulnerable populations, and protect the environment for the residents and visitors of Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet, and Otsego Counties.