

Dear Parents/Guardians:

On March 20, 2014, the Alabama Legislature passed the Jessica Elkins Act (SBO075, Act #2014-274) which ensures that all parents of students grades 6-12 be provided with information concerning meningococcal meningitis and the vaccine that is available. It is a disease that presents a higher risk to teenagers and young adults, but it may be contracted by anyone. Because of the serious nature of this disease, our legislators felt it imperative to increase public knowledge. It does NOT change immunization requirements, but the Centers for Disease Control recommends that children ages 11-18 receive two doses of the meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MCV4) which prevents four types of bacterial meningococcal disease.

At this time, there is NOT an outbreak of meningococcal meningitis in our school, county or state, and the parents of Jessica Elkins, a freshman at Athens High School who passed away on December 26, 2007, are working tirelessly to raise awareness of all aspects of the disease in hopes of helping other families avoid the fate of their daughter. The following is a link to the National Meningitis Association wherein Jessica's mom shares her story (<http://www.nmaus.org/stories/nma-advocates/alabama/>).

For your knowledge, the following document has been drafted by the Alabama Department of Public Health to answer any questions you may have regarding meningococcal meningitis and the available vaccine. Another great resource for information is the Centers for Disease Control website (www.cdc.gov) .

Thank you for taking the time as a parent to increase your knowledge of this disease, symptoms, modes of transmission and vaccination. Please feel free to contact your local school nurse with any further questions.

Sincerely,

Denise Smith RN