

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 21, 2005

Contact/Phone: John Robertson, Director of Health Promotion & Education
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From: The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency
Regarding: Vaccinations for Katrina evacuees.

**All Children 18 and Under Displaced by Hurricane Katrina Will Receive
Vaccinations through the VFC program.**

Excerpts from the DHHS Press release of September 18, 2005

HHS Secretary Mike Leavitt announced on Friday, September 16, that all children from birth to 18 years old displaced by Hurricane Katrina are eligible to receive (free) vaccines through the federally-run Vaccines for Children program (VFC), regardless of whether they are staying at shelters, hotels, or with family and friends and regardless of previous health insurance coverage status. Managed by HHS' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the VFC helps families of children who may not otherwise have access to vaccines by providing free vaccines to doctors who serve them.

Secretary Leavitt stated "... with each passing day there is hope for a brighter future for them, and we plan on doing everything possible to make sure their future is healthy. That's why we are taking this step today to make sure children have access to immunizations through the Vaccines for Children Program."

CDC's immunization recommendations for children displaced by Hurricane Katrina are aimed at keeping them up-to-date on routine vaccinations and protecting them from disease outbreaks in large, crowded group settings. The nation's childhood immunization coverage rates continue at record high levels, so there is no immediate threat of vaccine-preventable disease outbreaks among these children.

HHS considers all children from birth to 18 years old who have been displaced by the effects of Hurricane Katrina to effectively be uninsured, because they are not expected to have access to medical records or proof of insurance. Taking this action allows doctors, clinics, and health departments who provide childhood vaccinations to immunize these children using VFC vaccine.

The Vaccines for Children program is an entitlement program (a right granted by law) for eligible children, age 18 and below. Through the VFC program, public purchased vaccine is available at no charge to enrolled public and private health care providers for eligible children. More information about the VFC program can be obtained at

<http://www.cdc.gov/nip/vfc/>.

VFC vaccinations are available through all of the Tri-County Health Agencies clinic sites. Addresses and phone numbers are listed below.

Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency Immunization Clinic sites

Hillsdale Clinic – 20 Care Drive, Hillsdale – 517-437-7395 x136

Coldwater Clinic – 570 N. Marshall Rd. Coldwater – 517-279-9561 x100

Sturgis Clinic – 209 W. Hatch Street, Sturgis – 269-659-4013 x121

Three Rivers Clinic – 1110 Hill St., Three Rivers 269-273-2161 x208

CDC's Interim Immunization Recommendations for Individuals Displaced by Hurricane Katrina can be accessed at:

<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/hurricanes/katrina/vaccrecdisplaced.asp>.

Complete information on the full range of accelerated benefits available from HHS for hurricane victims is available at <http://www.hhs.gov/katrina>.

Additional Health information regarding Hurricane Katrina and the aftermath can be accessed at: <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/hurricanes/index.asp>