



## Department of Health

**ANDREW M. CUOMO**  
Governor

**HOWARD A. ZUCKER, M.D., J.D.**  
Commissioner

**SALLY DRESLIN, M.S., R.N.**  
Executive Deputy Commissioner

August 2017

Dear Colleagues:

This month, I'd like to share information with you about a new statewide program, Paid Family Leave, and also review the recommendations for human papillomavirus vaccination.

**Paid Family Leave:** Starting on January 1, 2018, New York's Paid Family Leave law assures job-protected paid family leave, giving New Yorkers the time to bond with a new infant or recently adopted or foster child, care for a family member with a serious health condition, or assist loved ones when a family member is deployed on active military duty. When fully implemented, New York will have the most comprehensive paid family leave program in the nation. Studies show that paid family leave benefits both families and businesses. Parents who utilize paid family leave are less stressed, new mothers have fewer symptoms of depression and higher breastfeeding rates, and infants are healthier. Employers report higher employee retention and morale.

As a health care provider, you play a key role in increasing awareness of this new benefit. I am asking you to inform your patients about Paid Family Leave: new parents, caregivers and those with family members on active military duty. Encourage patients and their family members to talk to their employers about eligibility and their plans to use Paid Family Leave.

Health care providers also have the important role of certifying that a patient's request for Paid Family Leave is medically justified. You will be responsible for providing patients with the appropriate documentation of their pregnancy, their child's birth, or information about their loved one's serious health condition.

Additional information for you and your staff regarding New York's Paid Family Leave benefit is available by visiting <http://www.ny.gov/paidfamilyleave> or contacting the Paid Family Leave Helpline at **844-337-6303**. We appreciate your partnership in spreading the word about New York's Paid Family Leave.

**Human Papillomavirus (HPV):** The human papillomavirus (HPV) is a very common infection affecting nearly half of American women and men aged 18 to 59 years. For most people, HPV will eventually clear up on its own. But for others untreated infection could cause certain carcinomas and genital warts. As we know, HPV is the main cause of cervical cancer, and can cause nasopharyngeal carcinoma, and carcinomas of the anus, vagina, or penis.

Fortunately, most of the roughly 31,000 cases of cancer caused by HPV each year in the U.S. can be prevented with the HPV vaccine. The vaccination series can be given any time between 9 years and 26 years of age. However, the preteen years are the best time to vaccinate. Studies show the vaccine produces a stronger immune response in preteens and

young teenagers compared to older teenagers and young adults. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) now recommend that all 11 and 12 year olds receive two doses of the HPV vaccine separated by 6 to 12 months, instead of the previously recommended three doses. Those who initiate the vaccine series at 15 years of age or older, as well as immunocompromised individuals, will still need three doses for full protection against the virus.

Since the vaccine was first recommended in 2006, there has been a significant reduction in HPV infections. In fact, New York State is being honored by the CDC this month for achieving among the greatest improvement in the nation in HPV vaccination rates from 2015 to 2016 with 71.5% of male and female teenagers in New York having started the vaccination series, as well as annual increases that exceed the national average of 60% over a four-year period. This uptick can be attributed in part to the work you're doing to educate parents and patients about the vaccine. With your help, we can further decrease the incidence of HPV. As the new school year approaches, I encourage you to talk to parents about the HPV vaccine during their child's annual wellness visit. While not all parents may want HPV vaccination for their child, it is important to educate parents that the vaccine is most effective before their children are exposed to the virus. Include the HPV vaccine when you mention other required adolescent vaccines. Frame it in terms of cancer prevention, and be prepared to answer questions from parents and guardians.

For guidance, I recommend the CDC's HPV [For Clinicians](#) and the Department's [HPV Vaccine is Cancer Prevention Toolkit](#).

I appreciate your assistance with both these issues, which are important to the health and well-being of New Yorkers. Thank you, as always, for your commitment to keeping your patients healthy. Enjoy the rest of your summer!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Howard Zucker, M.D." in a cursive script.

Howard A. Zucker, M.D., J.D.