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ENDORSEMENTS FOR THE UNIVERSAL HEPATITIS B BIRTH DOSE

Dear Hospital or Birth Center Decision-Maker:

July 2013

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Family Physicians, and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists recommend that the first dose of hepatitis B vaccine be administered prior to hospital discharge for every newborn in the United States. In addition, the birth dose coverage rate has been adopted as a measure of hospital quality by the National Quality Forum.

This birth dose of hepatitis B vaccine is the first step in creating a vaccine safety net that will protect infants from hepatitis B infection and from the development of chronic hepatitis B infection if acquired through contact with an infected mother, household member, or caregiver. Data from the July 2011–June 2012 National Immunization Survey (NIS) found that 70% of U.S. newborns received a dose of hepatitis B vaccine by 3 days of age. The NIS data show a marked amount of variability by state in the use of the birth dose, ranging from 88% all the way down to only 29%. This variability indicates that it is feasible for most states to do substantially better on their birth dose coverage, and that all states need to improve the use of the birth dose of hepatitis B vaccine to enhance protection of newborn infants.

An estimated 800 U.S. newborns are still becoming chronically infected with hepatitis B each year from exposure at birth or during the first months of life. We are encouraging all hospitals to have policies in place to protect newborns from this important cause of liver failure and liver cancer.

The Immunization Action Coalition (IAC), a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, has been working to promote ACIP hepatitis B vaccination recommendations for nearly 20 years. We are providing these resource materials to assist hospitals that do not already have a written policy to implement hepatitis B prevention protocols that ensure all newborns receive a birth dose of hepatitis B vaccine. These resources can help your hospital establish policies, procedures, and standardized admission orders to include hepatitis B vaccine as part of the medical management for all newborns delivered in the hospital. The resources include background information about perinatal hepatitis B transmission and educational materials for parents and staff.

If you have questions about any of the materials, do not hesitate to contact the Immunization Action Coalition. In addition, every state, territory, and many large city health departments have perinatal hepatitis B coordinators on staff. The coordinator in your city or state will be a great resource to help you implement hospital policies to protect all infants born in your hospital. Contact information is included with these materials.

We appreciate your interest in protecting infants born in your hospital from contracting hepatitis B virus. Please make sure your hospital has implemented the nationally recommended policies to assure that every newborn in your facility receives their first dose of hepatitis B vaccine before hospital discharge.

Sincerely,

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