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PRESS RELEASE – For Immediate Release

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Childhood Immunizations: SCPHD Works to Alleviate Financial Burden to Parents

TWIN FALLS—A tight state budget that started July 1, may change for some families the price of immunizations for children. State-provided immunizations for all children regardless of insurance status have ended. South Central Public Health District (SCPHD) will continue to bill Blue Cross of Idaho or Regence Blue Shield of Idaho insurance for families with coverage.

“To help alleviate this considerable financial burden to southern Idaho parents, who have health insurance other than Blue Cross of Idaho or Regence Blue Shield of Idaho, SCPHD will only require an initial 20 percent payment (due at the time of service), with the remaining 80 percent of the immunization costs billed to the parent or guardian,” said Rene LeBlanc, SCPHD District Director.

Families enrolled in Medicaid, those with no health insurance or health insurance that doesn’t cover immunizations, or families with children who are Alaska Native or Native American will continue to receive the state-provided immunizations through the Vaccine for Children Program (VFC).

Families with health insurance should check their coverage, deductibles and co-pays before making their child’s immunization appointment. All appointments need to be made at least two weeks in advance. Parents need to have current immunization records available when making an appointment and must bring their insurance/Medicaid card with them as it is needed for billing.

The state has provided immunizations for all children since 1994. This year, Idaho Department of Health and Welfare recommended a reduction of \$2.8 million for immunization purchases (under the Universal-Select program) from the 2010 state budget, due to fiscal constraints.

“Immunizations are still one of the single most effective disease prevention measures in the history of public health,” said Lisa Klamm, who coordinates South Central Public Health District’s immunization program. “This change may mean more out-of-pocket expense for some families, but it’s to keep their children healthy and free from immunization-preventable diseases.”

Immunizations have eliminated smallpox, polio, and diphtheria in the United States and have nearly eliminated measles, mumps, tetanus, and whooping cough.

Idaho saves children's immunization records in a registry called IRIS. Families can enroll their children in the free immunization registry at SCPHD or at their doctor's office. IRIS helps families stay current on their children's needed immunizations and provides families with accurate records.

Appointments for immunizations at South Central Public Health District offices are available in:

- Bellevue: 208-788-4335
- Burley: 208-678-8221
- Gooding: 208-934-4477
- Jerome: 208-324-8838
- Rupert: 208-436-7185
- Twin Falls: 208-737-5966

For more information on the changes to childhood immunizations, please call Cheryle Becker at SCPHD, 737-5936.

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