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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **HPV vaccine now available on limited basis at City-County Health Department**

The Human Papillomavirus Vaccine or HPV vaccine is now available on a limited basis at the Oklahoma City-County Health Department. This vaccine is highly effective in preventing the viral infection that causes most cervical cancer in women.

At this time the vaccine is only available through the federal Vaccine For Children (VFC) program, a public-purchased vaccine program that provides immunizations at no cost to eligible children. The three-dose vaccination will be available on a voluntary basis with parental consent to females ages 9 through 18 years who qualify for the VFC program. Eligible children include those who have no health insurance or are uninsured, are Medicaid-eligible, or are American Indian or Alaska Native.

The vaccine will be given at the Oklahoma City-County Health Department's main building located at 921 NE 23<sup>rd</sup> Street in Oklahoma City during regular business hours for the Immunization Clinic. The hours are; Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 and Wednesday from 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. For further information call 425-4450 during the regular business hours.

According to Phillip Parker, Immunization Program Administrator, "We have been receiving calls for several months about this vaccine. There is a lot of interest about when it will be available, what the cost will be and who should receive the shots."

HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infection in the United States and there is no cure or treatment for it. The federal Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommends HPV vaccination for preteen girls to provide immunity before they become sexually active. For girls and women who get vaccinated before their first sexual contact, the vaccine is extremely effective. For those who are exposed to the virus before getting the vaccine, it does not work as well, though most females will still benefit from getting the vaccine. The vaccine is licensed for females aged 9 to 26 years.

By age 50, at least 80 percent of women will have acquired HPV infection, putting them at risk of cervical cancer. The American Cancer Society estimates that about 11,150 women in the U.S. will be diagnosed with cervical cancer in 2007, and about 3,670 women will die from the disease this year. In Oklahoma, about 200 cases of cervical cancer are diagnosed annually and about 60 women die from the disease every year.

Public health officials stress that even with the new HPV vaccine, Pap tests will remain an important tool in cervical cancer screening because some cervical cancers are caused by viruses not responsive to the current vaccine.

“We are pleased to be able to offer the HPV vaccine, which may truly save lives,” said Dr. Paul Dungan, Director of the Oklahoma City-County Health Department. “We’ll be happy to talk with parents about the vaccine so they can make an informed choice on whether they wish to seek it for their daughters.”

For more information on the new HPV vaccine, or other vaccinations offered by the Oklahoma City-County Health Department, call 425-4450. Additional information on the HPV vaccine is also available at the following web sites:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <http://www.cdc.gov/std/hpv/default.htm>

Oklahoma State Department of Health: <http://www.health.state.ok.us/>

Oklahoma City-County Health Department: <http://www.cchdoc.com/>