(Students requesting exemption from the meningitis vaccine for medical, religious, or other reasons, must read, sign and return this form)

Dear Parent/Student:

In order to be in compliance with Pennsylvania state law, Mercyhurst University requires a meningitis vaccine for incoming freshmen and transfer students under the age of 25 years of age who are living on campus. If your student has already received a meningitis vaccine, you can disregard this form. If the student has chosen not to receive the vaccine due to medical, religious, or other reason, the law states that a student may waive the vaccine after reading this educational information and carrying out careful deliberation. A student waiving the vaccine must read, sign and return this form before starting on campus in order to avoid issues with residential housing on campus.

International students should be certain to obtain a meningitis vaccine that protects them against the most common U.S. strains - types A, C, Y, and W-135. If an international student does not obtain this, the student will need to sign and return this waiver form, or acquire the appropriate form of the vaccine before starting on campus.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American College Health Association (ACHA) urge that all first-year students living in residence halls be immunized against meningococcal disease. The CDC recommends that adolescents who received a meningitis vaccine (meningococcal vaccine “conjugate”) prior to age 16 receive a booster between the ages of 16 to 18 to provide the best protection during the ages of highest risk. At least 70 percent of all cases of meningococcal disease in college students are vaccine preventable.

Meningococcal disease is a rare, but potentially fatal, bacterial infection commonly referred to as “meningitis.” Meningococcal bacteria can cause severe disease, including meningitis and sepsis, resulting in permanent disabilities and even death. The Center for Disease Control notes that adolescents ages 16 through 21 years have the highest rates of meningococcal disease accounting for nearly 30 percent of all cases in the United States. Approximately 100 to 125 cases of meningococcal disease occur on college campuses each year, and 5 to 15 students will die as a result. Meningitis is a contagious disease that is transmitted by droplets of respiratory secretions in the air from direct contact with an infected person/carerrier. Due to lifestyle factors, such as crowded living situations, bar patronage, active or passive smoking, irregular sleep patterns, and sharing of personal items, college students living on campus are more likely to acquire meningococcal disease than the general population. Meningococcal infection progresses very rapidly and is often difficult to diagnose, because early symptoms of the disease such as high fever, severe headache, stiff neck, rash, nausea, vomiting lethargy and confusion also mimic those of the flu. The seasonality of the disease also parallels that of the influenza season. Early treatment is critical.

A reformulated meningococcal vaccine (“conjugate”) is available that has the potential to provide longer duration of protection against four of the five strains (or types) of bacteria that cause meningococcal disease in
the United States—types A, C, Y, and W-135. Potential side effects of the vaccine include: possible pain, redness, swelling at the injection site and possibly, fever. As with any vaccine, vaccination against meningitis may not protect 100 percent of all susceptible individuals. It does not protect against viral meningitis.

**Please make sure that your student is vaccinated before coming to school and that all immunizations are up to date.**

For more information, please feel free to contact Cohen Student Health Center at 814-824-2431, Monday-Friday 9am-4pm or contact your family physician.

Sincerely,

*Judy Smith, Ph.D.*

Judy Smith, Ph.D.
Executive Director of Wellness

MANDATORY COLLEGE MENINGITIS VACCINE/EXEMPTION FORM (page 2)
***TO BE COMPLETED ONLY IF THE STUDENT DID NOT RECEIVE THE MENINGITIS VACCINE***

**PLEASE PRINT**

Student’s Name: ________________________________  Date of Birth: __________________

Home Address: ________________________________________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Street</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Zip</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Home Telephone: ________________________________  Student Cell Phone: __________________

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**PLEASE MARK THIS BOX IF YOU ARE REQUESTING A WAIVER FOR ANY REASON AND SIGN BELOW**

☐ I have received a copy of and have read the letter regarding information about the Meningitis Vaccination. I believe that I understand the benefits and risks of the vaccine required. However, **I am requesting exemption from Pennsylvania Act 2002-83, known as the College and University Student Vaccination Act.**

My reason for requesting a waiver is due to:

☐ MEDICAL EXEMPTION: (the physical condition of the above named student is such that immunization would endanger life or health)

Signature: __________________________ Date: __________________

(Physician)

☐ RELIGIOUS EXEMPTION: I, ________________________(Print Name) adhere to a religious belief whose teachings are opposed to such immunizations.

☐ OTHER: __________________________

Student Signature: __________________________ Date: __________________

(Physician)

(Parent/Guardian, if under 18 years old)