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Office of the Governor
NEWS RELEASE

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Governor Signs Safe Needles Bill Provides Protection for Health Care Workers

Governor Christie Whitman today signed legislation that will require health care facilities to use safety needles and sharp devices.

"Every day health care workers dedicate themselves to providing quality health services to our citizens," said Governor Whitman. "We must recognize the risks they may face when administering some treatments. This bill will help minimize the incidence of inadvertent needle stick injuries suffered by health care workers."

A-3546 was sponsored by Assembly Members Alan M. Augustine (R- Middlesex/Morris/Somerset/Union) and Barbara Wright (R-Mercer/Middlesex) and Senators Joseph F. Vitale (D-Middlesex), John O. Bennett (R-Monmouth), Jack Sinagra ((R-Middlesex), Diane B. Allen (R-Burlington/Camden) and Peter A. Inverso (R-Mercer/Middlesex), will require health care facilities to use safety needles and sharp devices with integrated safety features.

The Commissioner of the Department of Health and Senior Services will establish a date upon which the bill would apply to pre-filled syringes. Also, the Commissioner will develop evaluation criteria that will be used in selecting specific needles and other sharp devices to be used.

If a safety needle is not available for a specific patient use, another needle or sharp device may be used until products with the safety features are available.

In addition, each health care facility must establish an evaluation committee to select needles and other sharp devices according to the criteria established by DHSS. Education and training must be provided in the use of the safety needles and a mechanism must be created to continually evaluate newly introduced needles.

A record must be kept of all needle stick injuries and reported to DHHS. Also, a procedure must be established for health care professionals to request a waiver to use a needle that is not a safety needle selected by the facility. In addition, a health care professional is permitted to use a needle that is not a selected safety needle if the safety needle may have a negative impact on patient safety or the success of a medical procedure. All waivers may be reported to DHSS and the Department will report annually to the Senate and Assembly Health Committees on the implementation of this bill.