



Press Release
For Immediate Release:
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Blood Center to begin accepting 16-year-old donors, Feb. 1

Beginning February 1, sixteen year olds will have the opportunity to donate blood in Rhode Island, lowering the eligibility age for donation by a year and immediately increasing the pool of eligible donors, while helping to instill the positive habit of blood donation earlier.

Rhode Island joins more than 30 other states that have lowered blood donation eligibility to 16-year-olds. Legislation was approved in the state House of Representatives in the last session, in the state Senate during the special session last summer, and signed by the governor.

The Blood Center set February 1 as the implementation date to allow for education in schools and preparation of materials that will be helpful to parents and new donors.

“There is no physical reason that a 16-year-old who meets eligibility requirements cannot donate blood,” said Scott Asadorian, The Rhode Island Blood Center’s Chief Operating Officer. “We have made this adjustment to get in step with much of the rest of the nation, and to get younger people into the habit of donating blood earlier.

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“It will allow 16-year-olds an opportunity for community service through blood donation, and provide blood recipients with additional resources for life saving blood products,” Asadorian said.

The greatest impact will occur at high school blood drives that run in most public and private schools around the state. Sixteen year olds are eligible to donate at all blood drives and donor centers, besides the school drives.

Around the nation, blood collection agencies have found high school drives increase collections by up to 30 percent. The Rhode Island Blood Center is not making any projections on the impact the new policy will have, but emphasize the importance of instilling the habit of blood donation earlier.

“As an abundance of caution, we are requiring 16-year-olds to meet a higher weight requirement, 130 pounds, than other donors, who only need to weigh 110 pounds,” said Dr. Carolyn Young, The Rhode Island Blood Center’s Chief Medical Officer. “Additionally, 16-year-old are required to have parental permission forms signed, which is not a requirement of other donors, although some schools ask that all student donors have school generated permission forms signed.”

The Blood Center’s 16-year-old parental permission forms will be available in mid-January in advance of all school drives at the schools, on The Blood Center’s Web Site (www.ribc.org), or at any donation location.