

# CONTROL AND MANAGEMENT OF COMMUNICABLE DISEASE EXPOSURES AND OUTBREAKS

State and local health departments are required by law to control certain communicable diseases. Early recognition, reporting, and intervention will reduce the spread of infection in childcare settings and schools. Exposures and outbreaks of communicable diseases in childcare settings and schools can result in spread to the general community.

Section 1 includes the exclusion policies for children in childcare/preschool and schools. When the child enrolls in childcare or school, parents/guardians should be given a list of exclusion policies and given notice whenever these policies change. Some childcare facilities or schools may have this information in a student handbook or on their websites. These policies may be useful when exposures or outbreaks occur.

Section 4 contains information on what diseases are reportable in Minnesota, what information is needed when a report is made to the local or state health department, and a list of local and state health department disease prevention and control resources in Minnesota.

When a communicable disease of public health importance or an outbreak of illness in a childcare setting or school is reported to the local or state health department, the health department will investigate the situation. Specific prevention and control measures will be recommended to reduce spread to others. These measures require the cooperation of the parents/guardians, child caregivers, children, school health staff, health care providers, childcare health consultants, and environmental health inspectors. In these situations, recommendations will be made by the health department regarding:

- Notification to parents/guardians, childcare providers, school health staff, and health care providers of the problem.
- Appropriate preventive measures.
- Exclusion of infected children and/or staff.
- Interviews of parents/guardians and staff regarding onset date and type of symptoms. A data privacy statement will be included during each interview. Illness information about a specific child will only be released with permission from the parent or guardian.
- Collection of specimens, if necessary (use of consent forms to share information).
- Administration of antibiotics, vaccine, or immune globulin.
- Review of cleaning, sanitizing, disinfecting, and handwashing procedures.
- Review of food preparation or storage procedures.

Childcare providers and school health staff should be aware that these situations can be very stressful for everyone concerned. Cooperation and good communication help relieve some of this stress.

## **Reports to local or state health department**

Childcare providers or school health staff should notify the local or state health department as soon as an outbreak is suspected. Doing so can reduce the length of the outbreak and the amount of activity required to bring it under control.

## **Notification of parents/guardians and childcare or school staff**

In this manual there are fact sheets labeled *school health/childcare provider* and *parent/guardian*. The *school health/childcare provider* fact sheets are intended to be a reference for childcare providers and school health staff. *Parent/guardian* fact sheets are written so the information would be easy to communicate to parents/guardians.

## CONTROL AND MANAGEMENT OF COMMUNICABLE DISEASE EXPOSURES AND OUTBREAKS

It is important that childcare providers and school health staff let parents/guardians and staff know whenever communicable diseases are found in children attending their programs. The *parent/guardian* fact sheets contain information to let parents/guardians know what types of symptoms to look for and what prevention and control measures need to be taken. This manual contains fact sheets on most communicable diseases that you would expect to see in childcare or school settings. It is recommended that you either:

- Post the appropriate *parent/guardian* fact sheet, or
- Send home the appropriate *parent/guardian* fact sheet to each parent/guardian.
- For a **reportable disease**, you need to consult the local or state health department before posting or distributing the *parent/guardian* fact sheet.

<b>DISEASE NAME</b> Reportable to local or state health department
<b>Consult the health department before posting/distributing Parent/Guardian fact sheet.</b>
<b>CAUSE</b>
<b>SYMPTOMS</b>
<b>SPREAD</b>
<b>INCUBATION</b>
<b>CONTAGIOUS PERIOD</b>
<b>EXCLUSION</b>
<b>DIAGNOSIS</b>
<b>TREATMENT</b>
<b>PREVENTION/CONTROL</b>

Many times, getting accurate information from the health department reassures parents/guardians that the situation is being closely followed and that efforts are being made to prevent further spread.

- Do not post or distribute fact sheets for hepatitis B, hepatitis C, HIV infection, or bedbugs. Consult with your local or state health department if you have questions or a situation occurs. Each situation and next steps will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

### Sample line list

A line list is a tool that can be used by health staff when a childcare or school is receiving sporadic reports of illness in children from different classrooms. It is a standardized way to analyze data to determine the presence of an outbreak. In a line list, each column represents an important variable, such as name, age, and symptoms present, while each row represents a different case. New cases are added as they are identified.

The line list for gastrointestinal illness is provided as an example (see Section 5). Epidemiology staff can modify this tool to collect data on respiratory infections, skin infections, or for other situations. Call your local health department if you need a modified line list.

For more information, call Hennepin County HSPHD-Epidemiology at (612) 543-5230 or call your local health department.