

I. Policy Statement

The Board of Education of Howard County recognizes its responsibility to provide educational programs and services for all children residing in Howard County, and further recognizes its responsibility to provide a safe and healthy environment for students, employees, service providers, and volunteers. Because communicable diseases are one of the most common causes of student illness and absenteeism, preventing and reducing transmission of communicable diseases are recognized as essential responsibilities of the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS).

II. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish regulations and procedures to aid HCPSS personnel in preventing and reducing transmission of communicable diseases among students, employees, service providers, and volunteers.

III. Definitions

Within the context of this policy, the following definitions apply:

- A. Communicable Disease – An illness due to a specific infectious agent or its toxic products that arises through transmission of the agent or its toxins from an infected person, animal, or inanimate reservoir to a susceptible host.
- B. Confidentiality – The non-disclosure or non-transmission of information to unauthorized parties by employees, service providers, or volunteers.
- C. Exposure – Contact with an infectious person, environment, contaminated item, or surface that may be capable of disease transmission.
- D. Outbreak – An increase in the number of infections that occur close in time and location in a facility, above the baseline rate usually found in that facility. Usually the cases are presumed to have a common cause or to be related to one another.
- E. Service Providers – Individuals who provide services to the HCPSS, either through contract, grant, Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), or volunteer service, when those services involve access to students and employees, such as substitute teachers, mentors, chaperones, bus drivers, and individuals who participate in committees, advisory groups, and partnership programs.

- F. Surveillance – The ongoing, systematic collection, analysis, and interpretation of data in order to improve health and safety and to assist in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of public health practices.
- G. Transmission – Passage of a specific infectious agent from a source person, animal, or inanimate object to a susceptible host, either by:
 - 1. Direct transmission occurring when the infectious agent is transferred by direct contact, i.e., touching, kissing, sexual intercourse, biting, or by direct projection of droplets spread by talking, sneezing, spitting, coughing, singing, or other means.
 - 2. Indirect transmission occurring via contaminated objects, or materials, e.g., toys, soiled clothing, bedding, cooking or eating utensils, food, water, or milk.

IV. Standards

- A. The HCPSS will work collaboratively with the Howard County Health Department (HCHD) to control outbreaks of communicable diseases in the school setting.
- B. The HCPSS will implement surveillance and reporting procedures in collaboration with the HCHD.
- C. The HCPSS will provide assistance to families to ensure students are in compliance with current immunization regulations from the Maryland Department of Health (MDH).
- D. Students, employees, service providers, or volunteers suspected of/or showing symptoms of communicable disease will be case-managed in accordance with the MDH guidelines in consultation with the HCHD.
- E. Information about individuals with a communicable disease must be maintained in accordance with HCPSS Policy 9050 Student Records and HCPSS Policy 7010 Personnel Records.

V. Responsibilities

- A. The Office of Health Services and the Office of Safety and Security, in collaboration with the HCHD and other agencies, will comply with all applicable regulations and implementation procedures.
- B. School administrators must have available and will follow the HCPSS exposure control plan.
- C. School administrators and HCPSS supervisors will ensure that professional development occurs annually for all employees.

- D. Employees, service providers, and volunteers will follow procedures mandated by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), Maryland Occupational Safety and Health (MOSH) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- E. School administrators or designee will monitor student absenteeism and will report a ten percent absentee rate or suspected outbreaks to the Office of Health Services as soon as it occurs and subsequently on a daily basis.
- F. The Health Services Coordinator and Specialists will continuously monitor absentee rates and will consult with the HCHD when there is an increase in the number of schools reporting high absentee rates of suspected outbreaks.
- G. School administrators, in consultation with the Office of Health Services and the Office of Safety and Security, will communicate potential exposures to their school community.
- H. School administrators will ensure, in collaboration with Health Services employees, that students are in compliance with current immunization regulations from the MDH.
- I. The Health Services Coordinator and Specialists will review procedures for the prevention and control of communicable diseases at least annually and will revise the procedures as needed to ensure conformity with current medical practices.
- J. Health Services employees are responsible for implementing the HCPSS Health Services procedures regarding communicable diseases.
- K. School Health Services employees will maintain copies of the Health Services Manual: Requirements and Procedures for School Health Services.

VI. Delegation of Authority

The Superintendent is directed to develop regulations and procedures based on guidelines published by the federal government through OSHA, the United States Department of Health and Human Services, the CDC, and those published by the MDH, and MOSH.

VII. References

- A. Legal References
 - Annotated Code of Maryland, Education Article §7-401 to §7-403.1
 - Annotated Code of Maryland, Health – General Article 18-201, 18-202, 18-204, and 18-205
 - 29 CFR 1910.1030 Occupational Safety and Health Act
 - COMAR 10.06.06 Communicable Disease Prevention
 - COMAR 10.06.01.03 Communicable Diseases
 - COMAR 10.06.04 Communicable Diseases
 - HB 306/SB 257. Interstate Compact and Educational Opportunity for Military

Children, Maryland State Department of Education.

- B. Other Board Policies
 - Policy 3010 Emergency Preparedness and Response
 - Policy 7010 Personnel Records
 - Policy 9050 Student Records
 - Policy 9300 Homeless Children and Youth

- C. Relevant Data Sources
 - Requirements and Procedures for School Health Services Manual
 - Occupational Exposure to Bloodborne Pathogens circular
 - Communicable Disease Summary: A Guide for School Health Services Personnel, Child Care Providers and Youth Camps; November 2011 (MDH)
 - Procedure for Reporting Communicable Diseases to the Health Department
 - Reportable Communicable Diseases

- D. Other
 - 28th Edition – Red Book: 2009 Report of the Committee on Infectious Diseases Edition
 - Edition 20 – Taber’s Cyclopedic Medical Dictionary
 - American Academy of Pediatrics
 - Glossary, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
<http://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/infectioncontrol/glossary.htm>
 - Workplace Safety & Health Topic, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/programs/surv/>

VIII. History

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March 3, 2003
March 23, 2004
February 13, 2013
EFFECTIVE: November 7, 2019

COMMUNICABLE DISEASES –
PREVENTION AND CONTROL

Effective: November 7, 2019

I. Definitions

Within the context of these implementation procedures, the following definitions apply:

- A. Contagious Period – The time during which an illness is capable of being transmitted from one person to another by contact or close proximity.
- B. Homeless Student – A student who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, whether or not the temporary housing is located in Howard County, including:
 - 1. Students who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing or to economic hardship, or due to a similar reason; living in motels, hotels, transitional housing, or campgrounds due to the lack of alternative accommodations; living in emergency or transitional shelters; abandoned in hospitals; are runaways, living in shelters or other inadequate accommodations; or awaiting foster care placement.
 - 2. Students who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.
 - 3. Students who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings.
 - 4. Migratory students as defined under federal law who qualify as homeless because they are living in the circumstances above.
- C. Infectious Agents – Microorganisms capable of producing infections in susceptible hosts.
- D. Other Potentially Infectious Materials (OPIM) – An Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) term that refers to:
 - 1. The following human body fluids: semen, vaginal secretions, cerebrospinal fluid, synovial fluid, pleural fluid, pericardial fluid, peritoneal fluid, amniotic fluid, saliva in dental procedures, any body fluid that is visibly contaminated with blood, and all body fluids where it is difficult/impossible to differentiate between body fluids.

2. Any unfixed tissue or organ (other than intact skin) from a human (living or dead).
 3. Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)-containing cell or tissue cultures, organ cultures, HIV or Hepatitis B Virus (HBV)-containing culture medium or other solutions; and blood, organs, or other tissues from experimental animals infected with HIV or HBV.
- E. Parent – Any one of the following, recognized as the adult(s) legally responsible for the student:
1. Biological parent – A natural parent whose parental rights have not been terminated.
 2. Adoptive parent – A person who has legally adopted the student and whose parental rights have not been terminated.
 3. Custodian – A person or agency appointed by the court as the legal custodian of the student and granted parental rights and responsibilities.
 4. Guardian – A person who has been placed by the court in charge of the affairs of the student and granted parental rights and responsibilities.
 5. Caregiver – An adult resident of Howard County who exercises care, custody, or control over the student but who is neither the biological parent nor legal guardian, as long as the person satisfies the requirements of the Education Article, §7-101 (c) (Informal Kinship Care) or has been issued a U.S. Department of Health and Human Service’s Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) Verification of Release form entering into a custodial arrangement with the federal government.
 6. Foster parent – An adult approved to care for a child who has been placed in their home by a state agency or a licensed child placement agency as provided by the Family Law Article, §5-507.
- F. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) – Specialized clothing or equipment worn by an employee for protection against a hazard (e.g., gloves, masks, protective eyewear, gowns). General work clothes (e.g., uniforms, pants, shirts or blouses) not intended to function as protection against a hazard are not considered PPE.
- G. Regulated Medical Waste – Liquid or semi-liquid blood or other potentially infectious materials; contaminated items that would release blood or other potentially infectious materials in a liquid or semi-liquid state if compressed; items that are caked with dried blood or OPIM and are capable of releasing these materials during handling; contaminated sharps; and pathological and microbiological wastes containing blood or other potentially infectious materials.

- H. Sharps – Medical articles that may cause punctures or cuts to those handling them, including all broken glassware, syringes, needles, scalpel blades, suture needles and disposable razors.
- I. Standard Precautions – Guidelines recommended by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to reduce the risk of infection. These precautions (e.g. hand washing and wearing PPE such as gloves, mask, eye protection, and gown) apply to all blood, all body fluids, secretions, excretions (except sweat), nonintact skin, and mucous membranes of all students and employees and are the primary strategy for successful infection control.

II. Routine Measures

Diseases have varying periods of communicability that precede the onset of identifiable symptoms and, in some cases, are without symptoms throughout the entire contagious period. Methods used to control the spread of communicable disease in the school setting have limitations; therefore, general efforts to control communicable diseases must be carried out on an ongoing basis. General efforts include the following:

A. Hand Washing

Hand washing is the single most effective technique for preventing the spread of disease and will be encouraged throughout the school day. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

1. Hand washing will be included in the Health Education Disease Prevention and Control Unit wherever it is included in the curriculum.
2. School health employees will provide up-to-date information on proper hand washing techniques to school administrators/designees.
3. School administrators will be responsible for implementing hand washing procedures and encouraging students, employees, service providers and volunteers to follow proper hand washing techniques.

B. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

The purpose of PPE is to keep blood and OPIM from contacting the employee's, service provider's or volunteer's skin, eyes, and mucous membranes.

1. Appropriate PPE will be determined by the Office of Safety and Security and the Office of Health Services.
2. PPE will be provided by the respective office/department.

3. General work clothes, e.g., uniforms, pants, shirts and blouses are not considered to be personal protective equipment. The level of protection required is determined by the nature of the tasks being performed.

C. Personal Hygiene Measures

Employees, service providers, volunteers, and students will use good personal hygiene measures, including hand washing measures and the use of PPE, to protect both themselves and others from potential exposure to infectious agents.

D. Environmental Control

Environmental factors contribute to the spread of infectious agents so it is imperative that:

1. All buildings be maintained and cleaned on a regular basis.
2. All departments are responsible for implementing procedures for maintaining and cleaning related to the activities conducted.
3. All departments will implement appropriate cleaning schedules for the maintenance of their locations.

E. Standard Precautions

Standard precautions will be observed in order to prevent contact with blood or OPIM. When working with blood or OPIM, gloves and in some cases other protective clothing or PPE will be worn.

1. The Office of Health Services, in collaboration with the Office of Safety and Security will be responsible for annual training to review standard precautions.
2. School administrators and department supervisors are responsible for ensuring that professional development occurs annually for their employees.

F. Handling of Regulated Medical Waste

Potential health hazards are associated with the disposal of certain refuse and regulated medical waste and this disposal is subject to state regulations. Regulated medical waste will be disposed of in accordance with regulations set forth by OSHA and MOSH.

The Office of Health Services and the Office of Safety and Security, in collaboration with the Howard County Health Department (HCHD) and other

agencies, will comply with all applicable regulations and implementation procedures.

G. Immunization Procedures

Immunizations significantly reduce occurrences of communicable disease. State law requires that all students show proof of compliance with state immunization requirements. Current immunization requirements, distributed by the Maryland Department of Health (MDH), will be reviewed annually.

1. The Office of Health Services will develop and distribute to all school administrators an annual immunization memo which describes the current immunization requirements from the MDH.
2. School administrators will follow current immunization requirements and procedures as outlined in the Requirements and Procedures for School Health Services Manual and in the current memo regarding immunization requirements.
3. School administrators will not knowingly admit a student, or retain a student who does not meet the immunization requirements as defined in COMAR 10.06.04. Principals may temporarily admit students who present an appointment date (not to exceed 20 calendar days) to obtain missing immunization records or receive needed immunizations.
4. Students of active military families, entering a Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) school from certain recognized states, who do not have the required immunization records may be eligible to have 30 calendar days to comply with the requirements instead of 20 calendar days.
5. Homeless students cannot be denied entry into school. Pupil Personnel Workers, in collaboration with Health Services employees, will provide assistance to obtain required documentation for immunization and compliance.

H. Reporting of Absentee Rates

High absentee rates in schools may be an indication of an outbreak of communicable disease.

1. The school administrator/designee will monitor student absenteeism and will report a ten percent absentee rate or suspected outbreaks to the Office of Health Services as soon as it occurs and subsequently on a daily basis.

2. The Health Services Specialists will monitor these absentee rates and will consult with the HCHD where there is an increase in the number of schools reporting high absentee rates and/or suspected outbreaks.

III. Management of Students with Suspected or Confirmed Communicable Disease

The Office of Health Services will work in collaboration with the Office of Safety and Security and the HCHD for evaluation and management of students with suspected or confirmed communicable diseases.

Students with a suspected or confirmed communicable disease will be referred to the Health Services employees for evaluation and management.

- A. Health Services employees will follow procedures for the management of students as indicated in the Requirements and Procedures for School Health Services Manual.
- B. Health Services employees will notify the school's administrators and the student's parents of suspected communicable disease.
- C. Health services employees have the authority to dismiss/exclude student(s) as appropriate and may require medical clearance to return to school.
- D. Health Services employees will report confirmed or suspected reportable diseases to the HCHD and the Office of Health Services and/or the Office of Safety and Security.
- E. All employees will maintain the student's right to privacy under Policy 9050 Student Records.
- F. Health Services employees will assist administrators/designees in informing individuals/groups regarding potential exposures.

IV. Management of Employees, Service Providers, and Volunteers with Suspected or Confirmed Communicable Disease

The Office of Safety and Security will work in collaboration with the Office of Health Services and the HCHD for evaluation and management of employees, service providers, and volunteers with suspected or confirmed communicable diseases.

When an employee, service provider, or volunteer is suspected of having a communicable disease, the following steps will be taken:

- A. The administrator, school health professional, or department supervisor will contact the Office of Safety and Security and/or the Office of Health Services for evaluation and management of the employee, service provider, or volunteer.

- B. The administrator or department supervisor, with guidance from the Office of Health Services, will have the authority to dismiss/exclude employees, service providers, or volunteers as appropriate and may require medical clearance to return to the school/office.
- C. The Office of Safety and Security and/or the Office of Health Services will report suspected and confirmed reportable diseases to the HCHD and the Superintendent/designee.
- D. All employees will maintain the right to privacy of employees, service providers, and volunteers.
- E. Health Services employees, in collaboration with the Office of Safety and Security will assist administrators or department supervisors in informing individuals/groups regarding potential exposures.

V. History

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