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Wayne Highlands School District

DAMASCUS AREA SCHOOL
174 HIGH SCHOOL ROAD
DAMASCUS PENNSYLVANIA 18415

David Jagger
Principal

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Pennsylvania Department of Health

Bureau of Communicable Diseases Room 1023

625 Forster St.

Harrisburg, PA 17120-0701

April 22, 2016

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am writing to you as a School Nurse on behalf of students who are not immunized or under-immunized for health related reasons who may be impacted by communicable diseases and situations out of their control. I recently experienced this problem at my school. I am aware that there are new immunization guidelines and requirements that are affecting provisional enrollments in schools and am happy about these proposed changes. The reason for this letter is not only about immunization exemptions, but about circumstances surrounding exposure to communicable diseases and "suspected" communicable disease cases and children who may be impacted such as those with compromised immune systems.

I had the opportunity during the last couple of weeks to deal with a "suspect" case of mumps. In this case the person with mumps was an adult who comes to our buildings to work with a designated student or students. The day after this person's primary care provider diagnosed this person with mumps, this person informed me. I then made a call to my local Pennsylvania Department of Health (Pa. DOH) office to report this diagnosis and to seek guidance with regard to the student population exposed to mumps.

In this case, the students that most concerned me included one student with Leukemia who had not completed his immunizations due to his need for chemotherapy and is medically exempt at this time, as well as three students who are exempt from immunizations due to religious or strong moral convictions. These students were exposed to this "suspect" case of mumps. It is difficult to tell a parent of a child with Leukemia that we have a "suspect" case of mumps that is not verified by a serology test and have them worry and call their primary care

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provider and their oncologist for direction. These parents also must then wonder if their children may become ill or if they should become immunized now, not to mention the exclusion process necessary for the other immunization exempt students.

I had parents questioning the validity of the diagnosis and asking for conclusive information for them to be able to make an informed decision and understand the guidelines necessary for me to follow. Mandating or recommending that healthcare providers confirm cases of communicable diseases if they are able to determine this by simple means such as serology testing or other such means would have provided without question what course of action was necessary for the child with Leukemia as well as those who are immunization exempt.

Please consider this letter as I am passionate and care deeply for all students under my care. This case has made me realize how many lives can be impacted by one "suspect" case of a communicable disease. I do believe we need to work together to educate our primary care providers and medical community about the need to confirm cases of communicable diseases for this reason. I am still evaluating the impact of the "suspect" case of mumps in my school and hope that we can rest assured that no further cases arise.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Deborah Henderson RN MS BSN CSN".

Deborah Henderson, RN, MS, BSN, CSN

Damascus Area School- School Nurse

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