



December 29, 2016

Dear Parent or Guardian and School Staff:

The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) has confirmed a case of tuberculosis (TB) at your child's/your school. This is the same suspect case you were notified of on December 23rd. The case has been confirmed by laboratory testing, and DHEC's investigation is active and on-going.

DHEC is working closely with school leadership to conduct a contact investigation of the school and its facilities. The contact investigation includes evaluating the school layout and routine activities of the case to determine the level of risk for classrooms, lunchrooms and other areas where students and staff congregate.

Based on information gained during this site visit, individuals who are identified as close contacts will receive the recommendation to be tested for TB first. As the contact investigation progresses, others may be recommended for testing. Only those recommended for testing will be tested by DHEC at each stage of the contact investigation. A TB contact investigation is a fluid process that is completed based on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance. Testing recommendations may change over the next few weeks as more information is collected.

TB testing is accomplished by a blood test or by a tuberculin skin test (TST) and may require a chest x-ray for a complete assessment. A positive TB test only tells the physician whether someone has been infected by the TB germ. Someone who has been infected cannot spread the germ unless they have symptoms of TB disease, such as a bad cough that lasts three weeks or longer, pain in the chest, and coughing up blood or sputum. Anyone with these symptoms should seek medical care immediately and relay to their physician that they may have been exposed to TB. TB can be effectively treated with antibiotics.

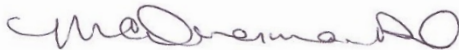
Testing everyone in a school is rarely recommended. If you or your child is recommended for testing, DHEC will provide TB testing at no cost. Testing will be coordinated with the school to limit the disruption to classes and school routines. Families/staff have the option of having any testing performed by their own physician at their own cost. In the event you elect to have your own physician perform testing, DHEC requests that your physician report the test results to DHEC.

Some people exposed to TB become infected with the TB germ, but only 5-10% of them go on to become sick from TB, also known as TB disease. Medication is available to help prevent people who become infected with the TB germ from developing active TB disease. If you or your child has a positive test for TB infection during this investigation, DHEC will provide antibiotics at no cost.

DHEC and your school thank you for your partnership during this on-going and developing situation. We respect your role and responsibility as parents/guardians and staff and will do our best to ensure you are getting available information about the contact investigation in a timely manner. Information regarding the first round of testing recommendations and plans will be communicated by Friday, January 6, 2017.

If you have questions or concerns, please contact the Careline at 800-868-0404. Careline staff will be available during regular work days from 8:00-6:00 and on weekends and holidays from 8:30-5:00 to answer your questions. For more information on TB, please visit the CDC TB website at <https://www.cdc.gov/tb/> and DHEC's TB web site at <http://www.scdhec.gov/Health/DiseasesandConditions/InfectiousDiseases/BacterialDiseases/Tuberculosis/>.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Melissa C. Overman', is written over a light gray rectangular background.

Melissa C. Overman, DO, MPH

Assistant State Epidemiologist

SC DHEC