

Information for Schools and School Nurses on Reportable Diseases

What are 'reportable diseases'?

Reportable diseases (e.g., measles, shigellosis, mumps, meningitis, pertussis) are those diseases that must be reported to the health department under state law. Healthcare providers, healthcare facilities, laboratories and schools are subject to this requirement under 64CSR-7. A list of reportable diseases and the required timeframes for reporting is available on-line at: <http://www.dhhr.wv.gov/oeps/disease/Reporting/Pages/default.aspx>

How do I report to the health department?

There are two main types of reporting; name-based reporting; and aggregate reporting.

Name-based reporting: A standard form is available for reporting diseases to the local health department: http://www.dhhr.wv.gov/oeps/disease/Reporting/Documents/Report_Card.pdf For immediately reportable conditions (e.g., measles, outbreaks) or diseases reportable within 24 hours (e.g., meningococcal meningitis, pertussis, rubella, etc.), also notify the local health department by phone.

Aggregate reporting: Influenza-like illness and chickenpox are reported on a different form: http://www.dhhr.wv.gov/oeps/disease/flu/Documents/Aggregate_ILI_reporting_form_August_2007.pdf The total number of cases for these two diseases must be reported to the local health department every week.

If you are not sure how to report a case of disease, contact your local health department for assistance.

How does reporting to public health work under Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)?

HIPAA allows confidential reporting to public health agencies for protection of public health. Cases of infectious disease that can be spread in a school setting are considered a 'health emergency' and may be reported to public health agencies under FERPA.

Public health agencies must also abide by strict confidentiality guidelines. For example, public health agencies will let the school nurse know that a student has an infectious disease if the school needs to take steps to protect other students and staff. Public health can only release information to the extent required to protect public health.

What kind of assistance can I expect from public health?

Public health officials can give you information on how to control the spread of disease and prevent other cases within the school. Health officials can also give you information to help explain the disease to parents, students, staff and administrators. The Division of Infectious Disease Epidemiology (DIDE) maintains extensive information for the providers, the public, and schools and parents at www.dide.wv.gov

Information for Schools and School Nurses on Reportable Diseases

How are outbreaks handled by the local health department?

Outbreaks are considered a 'health emergency' because they represent evidence of uncontrolled disease transmission. Outbreaks must be investigated rapidly to prevent further spread to students, staff, families and the community as a whole. Under 64CSR-7, schools are required to assist the health department in investigation and control of outbreaks. Outbreaks must be reported immediately by phone.

What is a line list and how are they used?

A line list is often used for investigating outbreaks in schools and other settings. In a school-based outbreak, a line list is a list of ill students and/or staff, usually by name, age and grade. The line list may have information on signs and symptoms, diagnostic laboratory tests, risk factors, parent contact information, etc.

Line lists can have many uses, including: counting the number of cases; evaluating effectiveness of control measures; identifying the likely cause of the outbreak; identifying common risk factors; documenting complete delivery of preventive services, etc. Line lists are so valuable for outbreak investigation, that they are frequently used until the outbreak is brought under control.

What is the purpose of disease investigation by the local health department?

Disease and outbreak investigation enable the health department to make science-based recommendations to prevent and control disease. The health department also monitors disease levels in the community in order to provide an early warning of outbreaks or other unusual occurrences. In this way, we can help you keep your students healthy and ready to learn and your faculty healthy and ready to teach.

How can I get more information?

Contact your local health department or the Division of Infectious Disease Epidemiology at (800)-423-1271. Or visit: www.dide.wv.gov