

Policy GBGA Staff Health

Issued 4/12

Adopted 10/14/21

Purpose: To establish the basic structure for practices related to staff health and communicable diseases as they apply to district employees.

Health screening

The district will not initially hire any person to work in any public school or kindergarten until that person has been appropriately evaluated for tuberculosis according to guidelines approved by the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control. The district will not require re-evaluation for employment in consecutive years unless otherwise indicated by such guidelines.

Any person applying for a position in any of the district's schools, including kindergarten, will, as a prerequisite to employment, secure a health certificate from a licensed physician certifying that such person does not have tuberculosis in an active stage.

The physician will make the aforesaid certificate on a form supplied by the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control.

Tuberculosis and the COVID-19 mRNA vaccine

New hires who receive the COVID-19 vaccination should defer tuberculosis testing for four (4) weeks after completion of the vaccine. If new hires receive the vaccination with two doses, the timeline begins following the administration of the second dose.

New hires can begin work after submitting a tuberculosis screening form indicating they are not experiencing tuberculosis symptoms and providing evidence of their vaccination status while awaiting the required tuberculosis test (screening forms will be provided by the district). New hires who check yes to any of the symptoms on the screening form will be evaluated further prior to beginning work.

The district requires each district employee to annually indicate in writing that he/she is physically and mentally able to perform the duties of the position for which he/she is elected or appointed.

If the district has questions or concerns regarding the physical or mental capability of an employee to perform the essential functions of his/her position with or without reasonable accommodations, the district may require an appropriate health examination.

Bus drivers

School bus drivers are required to pass a physical examination prior to hire and every two (2) years thereafter. Each driver must provide a copy of his/her qualifying Medical Examination Report to the Transportation Supervisor.

Communicable diseases

The board defines a chronic communicable disease as a persistent or recurring infection that may be transmitted to a susceptible person by contact with an infected individual. The U. S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will be the definitive authority on the identification and transmission of chronic communicable diseases.

It is not the policy of the district to automatically suspend employees with a chronic communicable disease. It is the policy of the district, however, to protect the health of members of the community by implementing a program of education, prevention and reporting with respect to chronic communicable diseases in cooperation with state and local public health agencies.

The district may reassign an employee with a chronic communicable disease to a position that limits student/employee contact. Alternatively, the district may place the employee on medical leave if medical judgment substantiates that said employee poses a significant health threat to students and/or other employees. The board reserves the right to remove or exclude any employee whose physical condition would interfere with his/her ability to work or would expose other students or employees to infection.

This district will notify other staff and students of the existence of a communicable disease in accordance with regulations and guidelines of the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control.

Staff health (HIV)

Evidence shows that the risk of transmitting human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is extremely low in school settings when current guidelines are followed. The presence of a person living with HIV infection or diagnosed with acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) poses no significant risk to others in school, daycare or school athletic settings.

Employment

The district does not discriminate on the basis of HIV infection or association with another person with HIV infection. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, an employee with HIV infection may continue working as long as he/she is able to perform the essential functions of the position, with reasonable accommodation, if necessary.

Employees with acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) or human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) should be under no work restrictions in the district, unless the employee's physician advises that medical impairments exist which are so severe as to be a hazard for the employee, district students or other employees. Employees infected with HIV or AIDS present no appreciable infection risk to others under normal school working conditions.

If an employee has been removed or excluded as provided above, as a condition for return to work, the district may require a satisfactory certificate from the employee's physician that the employee's presence is no longer a risk to the employee or to others at school.

Privacy

Students or staff members are not required to disclose HIV infection status to anyone in the education system. HIV antibody testing is not required for any purpose. Every employee has a duty to treat as highly confidential any knowledge or speculation concerning the HIV status of a student or other staff member. Violation of medical privacy is cause for disciplinary action, criminal prosecution and/or personal liability for a civil suit.

No information regarding a person's HIV status will be divulged to any individual or organization without a court order or the informed, written, signed and dated consent of the person with HIV infection (or the parent/legal guardian of a legal minor). The written consent must specify the name of the recipient of the information and the purpose for disclosure.

All health records, notes and other documents that reference a person's HIV status will be kept under lock and key. Access to these confidential records is limited to those named in written permission from the person (or parent/legal guardian) and to emergency medical personnel. Information regarding HIV status will not be added to a student's permanent educational record.

Infection control

All employees are required to consistently follow infection control guidelines in all settings and at all times, including playgrounds and school buses. Schools will operate according to the standards promulgated by the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for the prevention of bloodborne infections.

Equipment and supplies needed to apply the infection control guidelines will be maintained and kept reasonably accessible. The principal or his/her designee will implement the precautions and investigate, correct and report on instances of lapse.

A school staff member is expected to alert the person responsible for health and safety issues if a student's health condition or behavior presents a reasonable risk of transmitting an infection.

If a situation occurs at school in which a person might have been exposed to an infectious agent, such as an instance of blood- to-blood contact, school authorities will counsel that person (or, if a minor, alert a parent/legal guardian) to seek appropriate medical evaluation.

HIV and athletics

The privilege of participating in physical education classes, athletic programs, competitive sports and recess is not conditional on a person's HIV status. School authorities will make reasonable accommodations to allow students living with HIV infection to participate in school-sponsored physical activities.

All employees must consistently adhere to infection control guidelines in locker rooms and all play and athletic settings. Rulebooks will reflect these guidelines. First aid kits that include personal protective equipment for preventing exposure to bloodborne pathogens must be on hand at every athletic event.

Physical education teachers and athletic program staff should complete an approved first aid and injury prevention course or training that includes implementation of infection control guidelines. Student orientation about safety on the playing field will include guidelines for avoiding HIV infection.

Staff development

All school staff members will participate in a planned educational program that conveys factual and current information about HIV and other bloodborne pathogens; provides guidance on infection control procedures; informs about current law and state, district and school policies; assists staff to maintain productive parent and community relations; and includes annual review sessions.

Certain employees will also receive additional specialized training as appropriate to their positions and responsibilities.

General provisions

On an annual basis, school administrators will notify students, their family members and school personnel about current policies concerning HIV and other bloodborne pathogens and provide convenient opportunities to discuss them. Information will be provided in major primary languages of students' families. In accordance with the established policy review process or at least every three years, the principal or his/her designee will report on the accuracy, relevance and effectiveness of this policy and, when appropriate, provide recommendations for improving and/or updating the policy.

Bloodborne pathogens

The district has prepared and implemented an exposure-control plan for all employees based on the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). This plan includes appropriate training for those employees who may be likely to incur occupational exposure to blood or other potentially infectious materials. A copy of the plan is on file in the superintendent's office and each school.

Cf. EBBA, IHAM, JLCC, JRA

Adopted 12/17/92; Revised 8/25/05, 6/7/10, 4/26/12, 10/14/21

Legal References:

South Carolina Code, 1976, as amended:

Section 44-29-150 and 160 - Tuberculin test required of new employees

Section 44-29-200 - Attendance of teachers or pupils with contagious or infectious disease may be prohibited. Section 44-29-135(f) - Confidentiality of sexually transmitted disease records.

Section 59-10-220 - Adoption and notification of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations on universal precautions for bloodborne disease exposure.

Federal regulations:

U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration, CFR 1910.134 - Respiratory protection.

U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration, CFR 1910.1030 - Bloodborne pathogens. State Board of Education Regulations:

R-43-207 - All personnel will be screened for tuberculosis.

South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control Regulations: R-61-20 - Communicable diseases.

R-61-22 - Evaluation of school employees for tuberculosis.

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