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DATE: November 2014

TO: St. Clair County Physicians, St. Clair County Schools, Preschools and Daycares

FROM: Annette Mercatante, MD, MPH
Medical Health Officer

RE: **Head Lice**

Schools, pre-schools, day care centers and families continue to be challenged with head lice and may have questions relative to chronic case eradication, standardized treatment options, and established head lice policies and procedures. Most school districts in St. Clair County currently have long-established no-nit policies that may have created truancy issues for students with chronic live lice/nit infestations. It is the position of St. Clair County Health Department (SCCHD) that management of head lice should minimally disrupt the educational process, avoid ostracizing the child and protect family privacy.

Head Lice can cause intense itching as well as anxiety, but does not indicate poor hygiene or low social status. Having head lice does not lead to serious medical problems and head lice (unlike body lice), never carry or spread disease.

Generally, families should be able to treat head lice independently by following the enclosed instructions. Over-the-counter lice insecticidal shampoo treatments do not guarantee to kill all lice or nits, and the oil alternative treatment (enclosed) may not suffocate every nit. Some nits, dead or alive, may remain in the hair simply because they were missed during the screening process.

St. Clair County Health Department provides best practice pediculosis guidance in line with the American Academy of Pediatrics, the National Association of School Nurses and Michigan Department of Community Health. Based on this guidance, SCCHD makes the following recommendations for district head lice policy:

- Students with live lice and/or nits may remain in school until the end of the school day. Immediate removal of the child is unnecessary.
- Immediate treatment at home is advised. Information on treatment procedures should be sent home with the child.
- The student will be re-admitted to school after treatment and examination. If, upon examination, the school-designated personnel find **no live lice** on the child, the child may re-enter the school.
- Any student with nits farther than ¼" from the scalp should be allowed in school.
- Parents should be directed to remove nits daily and treat, according to product directions, if live lice are observed.

St. Clair County Health Department continues to:

- Provide training sessions to schools and organizations on how to check for and control head lice.
- Provide resource information for families, schools and community agencies.

Please review your school/facility lice related policies and procedures for possible revision based on SCCHD recommendations. Resources for more information have been included.

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