INFECTIOUS DISEASES – OUTBREAK AND EXCLUSIONS PERIOD POLICY

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1. What is this policy about?
1.1. This policy outlines outbreak procedures and exclusion periods for infectious diseases in ACT public schools.
1.2. The *Infectious Diseases – Outbreak and Exclusions Period Procedures* (the Procedures) support the implementation of this policy.

2. Policy Statement
2.1. Outbreak procedures and exclusion periods are enforced to control the spread of vaccine preventable and other infectious diseases in ACT public schools. These apply to a range of conditions (vaccine preventable diseases, conditions listed in 3.1 of the Procedures, and transmissible notifiable conditions).
2.2. Schools, parents and carers have obligations (depending on the type of condition) to help prevent the spread of disease including:
   - Notification of a disease or condition (by parents to the school and, for vaccine preventable diseases, by the school to the Chief Health Officer);
   - Compliance with exclusion periods and related procedures;
   - Taking reasonable precautions.

3. Who does this policy apply to?
3.1. This policy applies to all ACT public schools, principals, Directorate staff, students, parents and carers, volunteers, visitors and community members.

4. Context
4.1. *ACT Public Health Regulations 2000* (the Regulations) require that children with certain conditions are excluded for specified periods from school, preschool, childcare or family day care.
4.2. These rules help control the spread of vaccine preventable and other infectious diseases in ACT schools.
4.3. It is important that schools, parents and carers are aware of the procedures as they reflect statutory obligations in the Regulations.

5. Responsibilities
5.1. Policy Owner: The Director, Governance and Assurance is responsible for the development, monitoring and review of this policy.
5.2. Principals (or a person in charge of a school) must:
   - Inform the Chief Health Officer (or delegate) and the parent or carer where they believe, on reasonable grounds, that:
     - a student has a vaccine preventable disease, or has been in contact with a person with the disease or
     - a non-immunised child has been in contact with a person with the disease.
   - Inform the Chief Health Officer (or delegate) when they believe, on reasonable grounds, that a staff member has a vaccine preventable disease.
   - Provide information requested by a Public Health Officer, to control spread of the disease.
   - Follow procedures for that disease and comply with directions by the Chief Health Officer.
• Principals must phone their School Network Leader (SNL) and/or Executive Officer, Office for Schools as soon as is practicable of the notification and particularly if the Chief Health Officer requires a school to close.
• Follow procedures for conditions listed in 3.1 of the Procedures where they believe, on reasonable grounds that a student has a listed condition. This includes compliance with specified exclusion periods.
• Notify parents and carers of their responsibilities, including those in section 3.1 of the related Procedures, by school newsletters each year.
• Inform parents, carers, volunteers and visitors of outbreaks at their school by circular letter or newsletter but preferably both.

5.3. Staff:
• Must take reasonable precautions if they know or suspect that they have a transmissible notifiable condition (outlined in 3.5 of the Procedures) or have had a contact with such a person. Reasonable precautions include precautions taken on the advice of a doctor, Chief Health Officer or authorised public health officer/medical officer.

5.4. ACT Health Directorate:
• Will provide information to schools on immunisation records and exclusion requirements annually for schools to forward to parents and carers as part of the enrolment process.
• May issue School Health Directions including directives and/or specified actions if the Chief Health Officer believes, on reasonable grounds, that there is an outbreak of a vaccine preventable disease at a school, or in the local community.

5.5. Parents and Carers:
• Must exclude their child from school and, as soon as possible, notify the principal if they have reasonable grounds for believing their child has one of the diseases listed in 3.1 of the Procedures, or has been in contact with a person with one of those diseases.
• Parents must comply with any directions by the Chief Health Officer in relation to vaccine preventable diseases. This might include exclusion of a child from school.
• Parents and carers must take reasonable precautions to prevent the spread of disease in relation to the conditions in 3.1 or transmissible notifiable conditions in 3.5 of the Procedures.

6. Monitoring and review
6.1. The Policy Owner monitors the policy. This includes an annual scan of operation and review. A full review of the policy will be conducted within a three year period.

7. Contact
7.1. For support contact Governance and Assurance Branch via email DETMedia@act.gov.au.

8. Complaints
8.1. Any concerns about the application of this policy or the policy itself, should be raised with:
• the school principal in the first instance
• the Directorate’s Liaison Unit on (02) 6205 5429
• online at http://www.det.act.gov.au/contact_us
• see also the Complaints Policy on the Directorate’s website.

9. References
9.1. Definitions
• Vaccine Preventable Disease: diphtheria; haemophilus influenzae type b (hib) infection; measles; mumps; poliomyelitis; rubella (German measles); tetanus; pertussis (whooping cough); hepatitis B (see 3.2 of Procedures) or as declared by the Chief Health Officer.
• Transmissible Notifiable Condition: A condition determined by the Minister for Health and listed in section 3.5 of the Procedures
• Reasonable precautions include precautions taken on advice of a doctor, Chief Health Officer, or authorised public health officer/medical officer.

9.2. Legislation
• Public Health Act 1997
• Public Health Regulations 2000

9.3. Implementation Documents:
• Infectious Diseases – Outbreak and Exclusions Period Procedures

9.4. Related Policies and Information
• First Aid Policy
• Student Immunisation Record Keeping Procedure