November 5, 2007

Dear Parents and Caregivers:

We would like to inform you of a health issue that has recently received considerable attention in the media and is understandably a concern for parents.

The infection is called Methicillin-Resistant Staph Aureus or MRSA. The skin condition most commonly looks like an infected pimple or boil, and can worsen to include redness, warmth, swelling, pain, and discharge. It can be mistaken as a spider or insect bite. MRSA is spread by skin-to-skin contact or contact with contaminated objects. MRSA infections are commonly in the skin and soft tissue; although serious, these infections are not life threatening. The skin infections can be treated; this is why it is important to seek medical attention early, and if necessary, have a culture done.

You can be assured that SPCCC is practicing appropriate preventive measures to limit any spread of MRSA. You and your family can also help contain this infectious condition or potential exposure by following good hygiene practices:

- Wash your hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer;
- Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage until healed;
- Avoid contact with other people’s wounds and bandages;
- Avoid sharing personal items such as towels or razors;
- Wipe surfaces of exercise equipment before and after use.

Early treatment of suspected MRSA is important. If you are concerned about a wound or sore on your child or have any questions, please consult your health care provider.

Respectfully,

Lori Moulton
Executive Director
**MRSA Facts:**

- Staphylococcus aureus ("staph") infections have been around for a long time, causing mild to severe illness. MRSA is a kind of staph infection that may be more difficult to treat but is otherwise the same as a "staph infection". Mild infections may look like a pimple or boil and can be swollen, painful, or have pus or other drainage. More serious infections may cause pneumonia, bloodstream infections, or surgical wound infections.
- Staph is passed from person to person through direct contact with skin or through contact with contaminated items. The bacteria may live in people’s noses and on their skin and most of the time does not cause any problem. Staph can enter the body through breaks in the skin and sometimes cause infection. The main ways to prevent staph infection are to wash hands and care for wounds properly.

**Practical Advice for Teachers:**

- Observe children for open wounds; if any are draining or contain pus, refer the child to the doctor.
- Encourage hand washing before eating and after toileting.
- Following athletic activities, wash hands, cover wounds, and do not share personal items or towels.

**Practical Advice for Parents:**

- Clean wounds and cover them with a clean, dry bandage. Wounds that do not heal properly need medical attention. The only way to determine if an infection is caused by MRSA is through laboratory testing ordered by a physician or other health care provider.
- Teach children to wash hands regularly, such as before and after eating or toileting.
- Be sure your family members use antibiotics properly. Take all that are prescribed, even if the symptoms stop before the prescription is used up. Do not share prescriptions.
- Older children, who participate in sporting events, should wash their hands after each practice and game. They should not share equipment, uniforms, towels, or other personal items. Wash uniforms and towels with hot water and detergent after each use.

**General Disinfection Instructions:**

- In athletic areas, mats, benches or other shared equipment that might have skin contact should be disinfected after each use.
- Contaminated surfaces may be cleaned using an EPA-registered cleaner or bleach solution (1 part bleach to 9 parts water).
- Routine cleaning of other surfaces is all that is recommended. Because the bacteria live on the skin, they may be reintroduced into any environment at any time. Therefore, hand washing and wound care remain the primary means of preventing staph infections.

For further information visit:

The New York State Department of Health, [http://www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/communicable/staphylococcus_aureus/methicillin_resistant/](http://www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/communicable/staphylococcus_aureus/methicillin_resistant/)

CDC Questions and Answers about MRSA in Schools, [http://www.cdc.gov/features/mrsainschools/](http://www.cdc.gov/features/mrsainschools/)

New York Statewide School Health Services Center [http://www.schoolhealthservicesny.com](http://www.schoolhealthservicesny.com)