School Health Advisory Board Zoom Meeting Minutes 5/13/20

Present: Rebecca Abernathy, Gemilia Bouber, Lori Balaban, Kristin Carty, Kristy Davis, Christine Eagleson, Eileen Gomez, Kevin Kirst, Leanne Knox, Mark Niehaus, Hope Pertiz, Christina Pitsenberger, Chris Siebert

The board welcomed new members Kristen Carty (Scottsville) and Mark Niehous (Rivanna).

Physical Exams and Immunizations

School divisions had been instructed by VDOE to not send out Tdap/HPV notification amidst the pandemic since many medical practices were not scheduling well-child visits. Since appointments are now available, and ensuring up-to-date immunizations is an important public health measure, it is recommended that ACPS send out the Tdap notification as well as recommendations that parents schedule school-entry and sports-participation physical exams.

Eileen announced updated legislation effective July 1, 2021, students will be required to receive a meningitis immunization prior to entry into 7th and 12th grade.

The board does not recommend scheduling school-based vaccine clinics due to the importance of a well-child evaluation, which involves much more than required immunizations.

School Exclusion for Fever

Defining the temperature that constitutes a fever is challenging, but the consensus is to keep it conservative and simple for now and use 100.0 F (37.8 C). Parents may not have thermometers at home and there is limited market availability. It is recommended that school nurses check temperatures via a route other than oral during the pandemic. There may be some accuracy issues with Infrared no-touch thermometers. The CDC recommends that students and staff be excluded from school for 72 hours after the resolution of a fever during the pandemic. It was suggested that students with fever attributable to non-COVID causes be permitted to return to school when the typical criteria for exclusion for that condition resolves. It was recommended that communications about fever include temperature in Fahrenheit and Celsius.

Routine, daily temperature screening is not recommended for students or staff. Currently Albemarle County government employees are asked to complete a daily self-check affirmation. Mark provided information about a phone app for that purpose: COVID Symptom Study.

Nebulizers and Respiratory Procedures at School

a) Due to the creation of aerosols produced by administering nebulizer treatments or trach suctioning procedures, schools should consider banning these procedures at school during the pandemic out of concerns for the health of the student with respiratory illness, the school staff and the other students. Refer high-risk students to their specialist healthcare provider to determine if school re-entry is recommended or if homebound instruction is more appropriate.

Students Being Transported Home via Uber or Other Ride Services
There are concerns related to allowing students to use these services to be transported home in the event of illness. Who signs the student out as required by policy? Is it legal for under-aged children to ride is such a vehicle? Will drivers be willing to transport ill individuals? What is the existing policy – local and VSBA? Kevin will check on this with the ACPS attorney.

Isolation Room

Can we require that principals allocate space in the school to serve as an isolation room for sick students to wait for transportation home? The criteria of an isolation room: a location close enough to the school nurse that patients can be observed and cared for as needed, contain a window, be large enough that 2 to 3 individuals can be spaced 6 feet apart. If a space adjacent or close to the nurse’s space is not available, consider moving the school nurse work area to another larger location with space enough to place a divider between the student(s) in isolation and the workspace for the nurse to see other students, with adequate ventilation from a window, and in proximity to a restroom with handwashing facilities.

PPE for Nurses

Due to current shortages of PPE and the continued need to reserve N-95s for those administering COVID testing, recommended PPE for school nurses include procedure masks and goggles or face shields. It is also recommend that the nurses consider bringing a change of clothes and showering immediately upon arriving home.

Kristy recommended considering elastomeric respirators since they are reusable and offer superior protection than procedure masks, but they also require established OSHA protocols including fitting and monitoring.

It was recommended that masks be placed on ill children upon arrival to the clinic as well as other children receiving care in the clinic. It is likely that guidance will be issued that all building occupants wear mask, which may present logistical challenges, including donning and doffing and laundering of cloth masks.

Other points: implementing engineering controls, storing reusable masks in paper or plastic bags at the end of the day (although students should be wearing masks on buses), all clinic occupants including the nurse should wear masks, schools will have to teach and reinforce the proper use of masks and how their use protects those around the wearer.

Is the adequate availability of PPE and sanitation supplies a criteria for keeping schools open?

Nurses Administering Ibuprofen and Acetaminophen

It was recommended that there be limits on the administration of these medications to students in order to not mask illness. Nurses should be able to administer these medications for established conditions such as menstrual cramps, orthodontic pain, warranted injuries and migraines. It is reasonable to ask parents to provide permission from a doctor for other use.

Next Steps

Families will likely be concerned when school resumes and perhaps physician members of the SHAB along with the school nurses can provide a town-hall type of meeting prior to the start of the term.
Various educational needs were also identified: masks, exclusion criteria, hygiene/sanitizing, what constitutes an exposure and others.

The board agreed to await official guidance from the VDOE before proceeding further with planning the return-to-school phase. Kevin reported that guidance is expected within the next 3 weeks. The SHAB will reconvene then.