

MCCSC INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR BED BUGS

Background

In general, school and institutional child care center environments are not conducive to bed bug infestations. Bed bugs prefer an environment where they can hide during the day and come out at night to feed on a sleeping host. Major infestations of schools and child care centers are rare. However, bed bugs hiding in clothing or backpacks can hitchhike to and from schools and child care centers. Because bed bugs can travel in belongings, it is prudent for schools and child care centers to keep individual children's belongings separate. There is no association between cleanliness and a bed bug infestation. Anyone can experience an infestation.

School and child care centers with napping infants and toddlers may provide the type of environment suitable to support a bed bug population. If children in this type of setting are experiencing skin conditions that might be associated with bed bugs bites, then it may be necessary to investigate the school or child care settings as well as the child's home setting.

Policy Recommendations

An appropriate response plan would include the following:

- Establish a school Integrated Pest Management Plan.
- Train staff to identify bed bugs and the signs of bed bugs in the classroom and the children's items. This may include actual insects, cast skins or excessive insect bites on a child.
- Any student with bed bugs identified on their person or in their belongings may remain in school until the end of the day.
- Respond promptly to bed bug complaints within the school and through contact and counseling with parents. The longer the bed bug infestations are allowed to persist, the harder they are to eradicate.
- Parents should promptly respond to bed bugs in the home for the health and safety of the family and school community.

Roles and Responsibilities

Parents have the ultimate responsibility for their children. This includes:

- Assisting in the prevention and management of bed bugs through regular checks when bed bugs are found in the class, on the child or in the home, educating themselves and their children, and making immediate arrangements for inspection/treatment when bed bug infestation is suspected or confirmed.

School communities have responsibility for:

- Enforcement procedures for children with evidence of bed bug infestation in the home.
- The classroom where the bed bug was found should be carefully inspected by a trained professional (either MCCSC's Environmental Technician or a custodian who has been trained) including desks, floors, walls and storage areas for student belongings. A thorough cleaning will be done including vacuuming with special attention to cracks and crevices in furniture and equipment, walls and floors and drying washables on the highest heat setting. (>120 degrees F) If necessary, MCCSC's Environmental Technician, who is a licensed pest management professional, can treat infested areas with pesticides labeled for bed bugs.

- Disseminating current information about bed bugs.
- Holding educational sessions for parents and children if necessary.
- Continually provide to parents and the public information or access to information about bed bugs.

Procedures

Procedures to follow if a bed bug is found

If a bed bug is found on a child in school, it does not mean the child brought the bed bug into the school. Bed bugs do not infest people, they only feed on them. Bed bugs can crawl onto or off of a person (or their belongings) at any time. If a suspected bed bug is found on a child, a child's belongings or anywhere else in a school, the following procedures should be followed:

1. If the bug was found on a child or a child's belongings, the child should be discreetly removed from the classroom so that the school nurse or a qualified individual can examine the child's clothing and other belongings. Any bugs found should be removed and collected for identification. Try to keep the specimens as intact as possible. It is important to confirm that the bugs found really are bed bugs before proceeding.
2. We will continually provide information and suggestions on how best to avoid bed bug infestations at home.
3. If a confirmed bed bug was found on a child then the school nurse should inform the child's parents. An inspection report should be sent home with the student and completed promptly. Educational materials should accompany the letter. The school nurse should check the student's record to see if there are any siblings attending any MCCSC schools. If there are then those schools should be contacted. The nurse or health aide in those schools should check those students in other buildings.
4. Inspect and monitor classrooms. If specimens are confirmed, inspect crevices in baseboards, pictures, furniture, window, and door casings, wallpaper, behind electrical switch plates, in telephones, radios, clocks, behind wall mounted art-work. Look for the insects, their cast skins, bug droppings and eggs near crevices.
5. In most instances students should not be excluded from school due to bed bugs. Schools should not be closed due to the discovery of bed bugs. The school may become a source of dispersal to others in the school environment. Bed bugs brought into the school in a child's book bag or on their clothing could drop off in the classroom or in a locker. The bed bugs might then be picked up and taken home by another student or staff member inadvertently.
6. For children who repeatedly come to school with bed bugs, institute clothing and school item sanitation. These procedures should continue until the student has been bug free for 5 consecutive school days.
 - In an infested home, parents should store their child's freshly laundered clothing in sealed plastic bags until they are put on in the morning. This prevents bed bugs from hiding in the clothing and being carried to school.
 - Backpacks, lunchboxes and other items that travel back and forth to school can also be inspected daily and stored in sealed plastic containers at home to prevent bed bugs from getting into them. The inspection should take place in the health office.
 - At school the student could be provided with plastic bags or bins in which to store their belongings in order to prevent any bed bugs from spreading to other students' belongings.

- The student may be asked to bring freshly laundered clothing to school in order to facilitate a change of clothes while at school. When the student changes clothes in the health office they should stand on a white sheet. The sheet can then be wrapped up with the clothes and all of it taken to the dryer. The clothes the student was wearing should be dried for at least 30 minutes at more than 120 degrees to kill any bed bugs. This laundry task should be completed by the health aide and custodian. Precautions should be taken in handling the clothing. Have the student place the clothing in a bag to take to the laundry. The unusual instance where a child repeatedly reports to school showing evidence of bed bugs despite previous notification, education and counseling with parents, further investigation is needed. Repeated bed bug presence may be due to the following:
 1. Inability of parents to recognize the scope of an infestation at home.
 2. Failure to effectively treat a recognized infestation – this might be due to pest management failure, landlord/tenant dispute, lack of financial resources, repeated re-infestation from outside of the home (all places a student sleeps or visits, consider family members as well), non-vigilance or lack of concern on the part of the parent.
 3. Failure to adhere to recommended clothing and school item sanitation.
 4. Investigate other sources of bed bugs on school property such as lockers, buses, common areas or other areas where students routinely congregate.

If any of the above issues are thought to be the cause, targeted intervention may be warranted:

This may include treatment of school facilities and property if an infestation is found in the school or on busses. Investigative work may be required to figure out where repeated bed bug findings are originating. If a parent claims to be diligently dealing with an infestation and the student continues to come to school with bed bugs, there may be an alternative source or reason that the parents haven't been successful.

- Where the child spends time after school, before school or with other family members.
- Cars and other modes of transportation can become infested.
- Parents need to cooperate with the preparation of the home for treatment. If all instructions are not followed, treatment failure may result.
- The family must follow the recommendations for clothing and personal school item sanitation. While bed bug treatment is ongoing, it is important to remain vigilant in keeping bed bugs out of clothing and personal items brought to school. Schools may want to suggest or require having a spare set of clothing sent for the child in a sealed plastic bag. If bed bugs are found, have the child change into the clean clothes and place the infested clothes into the bag. Clothing may also be placed in a hot dryer (highest heat setting, include shoes) for 30 minutes prior to the child dressing in the morning. High heat will kill all stages of bed bugs.

In rare or extreme cases, a school may have to confront a situation where a parent or caregiver is incapable or unwilling to remedy a bed bug infestation in the home. These cases are difficult because a school must weigh several important factors. Providing a healthy, pest-free environment for students to learn is the responsibility of the school.

- Providing a healthy, pest-free environment for the staff is also a responsibility of the school administrators.

- Providing a safe and healthy living environment is a responsibility of the parent and NOT the school.
- A repeated bed bug introduction by a student constitutes a risk to other students and staff. While bed bugs do not transmit disease, they are a health issue because they are blood-feeding, human parasites. Once established in a home they can cause physical and psychological symptoms, and present a significant economic investment to eradicate. These facts are also true at the school level. Repeated inspections and potential treatment by pest management professionals, anxiety, frustration and lost instructional time on the part of staff and administrative efforts constitute a serious cost both economically and in educational efficiency.

Bed bug infestations are not only an individual family and school concern, but are of concern for the entire community. Individuals and institutions have their respective responsibilities, but it is incumbent on the community itself to attempt to help its members, particularly those less fortunate, to address an infestation.

While the policy recommendations outlined above do not generally support exclusion of a student for bed bugs, in some cases this option may be needed to be considered for resolution of the situation. Exclusion alone will not solve a bed bug infestation, but may serve to prompt stronger or more effective measures at home. Building principals and directors should use the IPM Committee as a sounding board to assist in a decision making process in particularly difficult cases.

Other options in rare or extreme cases may include:

- Notifying Child Protective Services in instances of suspected neglect DCS should be notified in addition to other agencies if/when they are on board with some “community” effort.
- Notifying local truancy offices if the child, due to repeated infestation, is missing an excessive amount of school.

Decisions to act through Children’s Protective Services or local truancy or prosecutor’s offices should be a last resort. Every effort should be made to assist the family with control of bed bugs before taking this action.

Adapted from:

MICHIGAN MANUAL FOR THE PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF BED BUGS

Produced by the Michigan Department of Community Health and the Michigan Bed Bug Working Group

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