



February 9, 2018

Parents and Guardians,

Polk School District understands and empathizes with the concerns surrounding the TB cases in Polk County. The district was notified of the confirmed cases by the Georgia Department of Public Health due to the patients' connection to our schools. The representatives were only allowed to disclose limited information due to possible violation of the individuals' rights.

The department provided the district with the letters that we were required to use for notification; the list of targeted student groups to be notified for exposure and need of testing; as well as, the letter to notify non-exposed student groups of the situation within the school.

Beyond the notifications, the district was not allowed to provide any further information. The Georgia Department of Public Health did not feel a widespread public health notification was required. In response, I have made a request to our local health department to allow Polk School District to make a statement based on our strong desire to be transparent in all communications with stakeholders.

The Polk County Health Department understands our concerns. This is a statement from Dr. Unini Odama, Health Director for the Georgia Department of Public Health Northwest Health District, which includes Polk County:

"We are working with Polk School District officials to identify and test individuals at risk of exposure to TB based on guidelines issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. We are confident that actions by school officials are guarding the health of their students and the public. The confirmed TB cases are being treated at home and do not present a danger to others."

Here is additional, useful information from the Polk County Health Department about the TB skin testing:

The test procedure consists of placing a small amount of fluid under the skin on the inside of the arm. A very small needle is used so your child will only feel a pinch. Make sure you don't put a bandage or lotion on the test spot. Also, don't let your child scratch the spot. If the area itches, put an ice cube or cold cloth on it. The test spot can get wet, but do not wipe or scrub the area.

Per CDC contact-investigation guidelines, individuals who initially test negative will need to be re-tested in 8-10 weeks.

If you choose to have your child tested by their primary care provider, please have the provider fill out all the information in the form you were previously given and deliver/mail it to the Polk County Health Department, 125 E. Ware Street, Cedartown, GA, 30125, or fax it to the Polk County Board of Health at 770-749-2298. All information will be kept strictly confidential.

Please know that Polk School District is working to protect the health and safety of all our students, staff and community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Laurie Atkins'.

Laurie Atkins, Superintendent
Polk School District