

## **Alberta Rider Head Lice Policy**

### **Introduction:**

First of all, we recognize that this can be very challenging and stressful for families. Not only is this a time-consuming problem to deal with, but it can also be expensive and impact the entire family. This is a stress our whole staff empathizes with and would do anything in our power to prevent.

### **How does Tigard-Tualatin Schools and Alberta Rider specifically make decisions about how to handle situations with lice?**

Alberta Rider follows the same lice policy as all other schools in the Tigard-Tualatin School District. Our policy was provided by the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) and the State School Nurse Consultant Group within the Public Health Division of the Oregon Health Authority.

### **What does the school do when a student is suspected of lice?**

We want to be discrete with children so they're not stigmatized and so we're not disrupting the learning environment. With that said, if a student has lice, we want to do everything in our power to make sure it's not spread to other students. Students suspected of lice are quickly and discretely sent to the office. They are checked by our office staff or school nurse. These folks are highly trained and know lice when they see it. If we find lice or nits we call parents and ask them to work to resolve the problem immediately.

It is unlikely that all head lice infestations can be prevented. Parents/caregivers will benefit from receiving support from school staff about the importance of regular surveillance at home, choosing and adhering to the protocols of evidence-based treatment recommendations, and educating to dispel head lice myths. The education mission of schools will be supported by implementing evidence-based policies and strategies under the guidance of the school nurse. The burden of unnecessary absenteeism to the students, families, and communities far outweighs the perceived risks associated with head lice.

The state's policy requires that this is always confidential, which is due in part to the federal law known as the Family Educational Right and Privacy Act or FERPA.

### **Does that mean families are not contacted when their child's classmate has lice?**

Yes. We are not able to contact families when a classmate of their child has lice. We understand this has been standard practice in the past, but doing so would be in conflict with FERPA. In addition, the State School Nurse Consultant Group and the School Nurse Consultant Group found that these practices were not helpful in reducing the risk of lice transmission.

According to these groups, communications such as these do not prevent or reduce the risk, but they do increase community anxiety, increase social stigma causing undue emotional harm and it puts confidentiality rights at risk. Also, by the time a lice transmission is discovered, the child may have already had lice for a month or longer. These groups recommend community education as the biggest deterrent to head lice. This blog is part of our attempt to do this.

### **What do you want families to know about Lice?**

We all play an important role in making sure our students avoid headlice. Dealing with lice is very stressful for families. It's uncomfortable for students and it can disrupt learning. Head lice is not known to cause disease, but it is extremely troublesome for all kinds of reasons.

Our teachers remind students to avoid head-to-head contact and to not lay on the floor. Lice do not jump, they crawl, so avoiding these behaviors significantly reduces the possibility of transmitted lice. We ask that our families remind students of that too and to do what they can to reduce the risk. This involves following basic guidelines around shared personal space & belongings when at a friend's house, day care or other places in our community.

### **Closing:**

The bottom line is we follow best practices outlined by experts, which includes educating students, initiating preventative measures and targeting support to students and families who need it. We want to do everything we can to minimize all potential disruptions to the learning environment. That includes keeping your lives at home as stress free as possible so all our kids can maximize their learning. If there's anything we can do to support you in that, on this topic or any other, please reach out to us.