

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
CONTACT: Jessica Lester (215) 884-6499

HATBORO-HORSHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT RESPONDS SWIFTLY TO CONTAIN SPREAD OF STAPH INFECTION

HORSHAM – After learning that a few students at Hatboro-Horsham High School had come into contact with a staph infection, Hatboro-Horsham School District officials have taken a number of proactive steps to prevent the spread of the infections and have alerted parents, students, faculty and staff to the health concerns associated with staph.

So far, the district is aware of three confirmed cases and two unconfirmed cases receiving medical attention. All involve students at the high school. After conducting their own investigation, Hatboro-Horsham School District officials determined that the infection was acquired at a wrestling camp held outside the district over the summer.

Once the first case was discovered, the high school took immediate action by notifying families of fall athletes. Students with confirmed infections were suspended from play until they had been cleared by their doctors. Federally-approved cleaning products designed to kill MRSA were purchased and the high school continues to use them to clean hard equipment as well as athletic areas including locker rooms, training rooms and weight rooms. Any equipment used by students with suspected and confirmed cases was discarded.

High school students have been advised to wash their uniforms and work-out clothing in hot water every day. Athletes are also being provided with disposable towels to wipe down their equipment. Skin checks are being conducted every other day by the high school athletic trainer. Meetings are also being organized to teach all male athletes and female athletes about staph and what they can do to avoid infection. Letters were sent out to all district parents, to inform them of the health concern and provide them with information on how to prevent the spread of staph.

Staph are bacteria that are commonly found on the skin or in the nose of healthy people. Sometimes, staph can cause an infection when it enters the body through open sores. Most infections are minor (such as pimples or boils), but sometimes staph can cause more serious problems (such as bloodstream infections or pneumonia). The type of staph that Hatboro-Horsham students contracted is called MRSA (methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*), and is common among athletes who come in close personal contact during activities such as wrestling and football. It is spread through direct physical contact and not through the air.

“We also contacted an expert at the Pennsylvania Department of Health who assured us that the District has taken appropriate proactive measures to contain the infection. Even though public reporting of MRSA is not required according to the state, we feel it is in the best interest of our students and their families to share this information. We continue

to evaluate additional actions we can take to make sure this infection does not spread,” said Dr. William Lessa, Superintendent.

Families of high school students who would like more information are being urged to contact Mark Ridgway, Athletic Director, at (215) 441-7912, or Tracy Sutton, High School Nurse, at (215) 441-7900. Additional information can also be obtained by visiting the district website at www.hatboro-horsham.org, and clicking on the link for the Center for Disease Control.