# **Blue Ridge CUSD 18**

# **Bed Bug Action Plan**

**Taken from “Bed Bugs: What Schools Need to Know” by the Michigan Bed Bug Working Group (updated May 2010)**

Recently many states have seen an increased number of bed bug infestations plaguing residents. As bed bugs infest more and more homes, they may find their way into schools. When this happens, the school needs to take proactive action to prevent infestation and stop them from spreading in the school setting. Blue Ridge Schools remains committed to providing a safe environment for students and school personnel.

**What are bed bugs?** Bed bugs are small, brownish, flattened insects that feed on the blood of people while they sleep. Although the bite does not hurt at the time, it may develop into an itchy welt similar to a mosquito bite. Bed bugs do not transmit disease, but they can cause significant itchiness, anxiety, and sleeplessness. Bed bug infestations are also very difficult and expensive to control. Usually bed bugs will hide during the day and only come out to feed during the night. Unlike head lice, they do not live on a person. However they can hitchhike from one place to another in backpacks, clothing, luggage, books, and other items.

**Could my classroom be infested?** Actual bed bug infestations in schools are uncommon. More commonly, a few bed bugs will hitchhike to school from an infested home by hiding in a student’s clothing or backpack. Bed bugs that hitch a ride into the school in one student’s backpack could be carried home by another student, making the school a potential hub for bed bug spread. This is not a minor concern – bed bugs are very expensive and difficult to eradicate. If a school plans to use pesticides to control pests indoors, then they are required under Illinois law to have an integrated pest management plan in place. If a bed bug infestation is suspected or a number of students are getting bitten during class, the school should contact a licensed pest management professional for assistance.

**What if I find a bed bug on a student?** If a bed bug is found on a student it may indicate that the student has bed bugs at home. However, bed bugs can crawl onto or off of a person or their belongings at any time, so it is also possible that the bed bug was brought to school by someone else. If a suspected bed bug is found on a student or a student’s belongings, the following procedures should be followed:

* Notify the school’s principal and nurse.
* The student should be discreetly removed from the classroom so that the school nurse or a qualified individual can examine the student’s clothing and other belongings. Any bugs found should be removed and collected for identification. Try to keep the specimens as intact as possible.
* If a confirmed bed bug was found on a student, then the school principal or nurse should inform the student’s parent or guardian of the bed bug presence on their child, preferably by telephone or personal conversation, followed by a letter home (sample parent letter is attached). Educational materials should be provided to parents, such as those located at <http://www.dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/environmental-health-protection/structural-pest-control/bed-bugs>
* The school principal or nurse should notify the affected classes, or send a note home to all students in the school if more than one class is affected (sample notification letter is attached), and the school personnel who work directly with the affected student/classes.
* Students should not be excluded from school due to bed bugs.
* Schools should not be closed due to bed bug presence. If pest management is necessary, it will normally be targeted to certain areas of the school.
* Ongoing pest management that includes the use of pesticides should be overseen by the school principal or designee and must conform to the school’s integrated pest management plan.

**What can I do to eliminate bed bugs from my classroom?**

* DO NOT allow untrained staff to apply pesticides on school property. Only authorized personnel may apply pesticides, and must follow the school’s integrated pest management plan.
* Backpacks, lunchboxes, and other items that travel back and forth to school can be inspected daily and sealed in plastic containers to prevent bed bugs from getting into them at home.
* Hard surfaces can be cleaned with standard cleaning products
* If bed bugs have been found repeatedly in a particular classroom, have the room inspected by a pest management professional or other trained staff.

**What if one of my students has an infestation at home?** When a student is dealing with an infestation at home, it is important to be sensitive to their problem. Although bed bugs have nothing to do with cleanliness or socioeconomic status, there is still a stigma that can come with having bed bugs. As a result, parents may be hesitant to admit to having bed bugs, and students may not want other to know they have an infestation at home. Students living in an infested home may also feel anxious or tired during the school day. Schools should work with the parents of any students living in an infested home to develop strategies for preventing the further spread of bed bugs.

* Notify the school’s principal or nurse.
* Determine if the infested home is being treated. Home remedies and do-it-yourself treatments are usually insufficient and could cause negative health effects or produce potential hazards in the home.
* 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.
* 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.
* Continue to use these measures until successful treatment of the home has been verified.

**What are possible actions the school can take to prevent and control bed bugs?**

* Reduce the degree to which student possessions move between home and school.
* Inspect clothing or items for eggs or bugs
* Place student items in a plastic bin
* Wipe down hard surfaces
* Vacuum thoroughly, including around baseboards and shelving, then discard vacuum bags outside
* Steam clean carpets with water temperatures of 118 degrees or hotter
* Work with parents to implement plans to address special situations
* Involve pest management service to provide guidance and services as appropriate for the circumstances.

# **Additional resources**

EPA Resources on bed bugs: <https://www.epa.gov/bedbugs>

Illinois Department of Public Health information on bed bugs: <http://www.dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/environmental-health-protection/structural-pest-control/bed-bugs>

Bed bug poster: <http://www.dph.illinois.gov/sites/default/files/publications/bedbug-poster-english2012-050316.pdf>

# **School Response Flow Chart:**

SAMPLE – GENERAL PARENT NOTIFICATION LETTER

(Place on school letterhead)

Date

Dear Parent/Guardian:

We recently found a bed bug in your child’s classroom. The source of bed bugs often cannot be determined, as bed bugs may be found in many places, including hotels, planes, and movie theaters. Even though it is unlikely for bed bugs to infest a school, Blue Ridge Schools will conduct an inspection and, if needed, will implement an integrated pest management plan in the area where the bed bug was found. Blue Ridge Schools will continue to work to identify bed bugs, provide thorough inspections of schools, and have licensed pest control specialists assist with pest management.

Bed bugs are a nuisance, but their bites are not known to spread disease. Bed bugs are usually active at night and feed on human blood. The bite does not hurt at first, but it may become swollen and itch, much like a mosquito bite. Watch for clusters of bites, usually in a line, on exposed areas of the body. If you have medical concerns for you or your child please contact your doctor.

If you have questions please contact me at the school. If you have questions regarding bed bugs, contact your local health department or visit <https://www.epa.gov/bedbugs>

Sincerely,

Principal

SAMPLE –SPECIFIC PARENT NOTIFICATION LETTER

(Place on school letterhead)

Date

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Today a bed bug was found on your child or in your child’s belongings. While this does not necessarily mean that the bed bug was brought to school by your child, it is important to your child’s health and the school community that you inspect your home for signs of bed bugs. Enclosed you will find information about bed bugs and an identification guide to help you with your inspection. Once you have inspected your home, please call me at the school to discuss further.

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If you have questions please contact me at the school. If you have questions regarding bed bugs, contact your local health department or visit <https://www.epa.gov/bedbugs>. We stand ready to work with you in any way needed.

Sincerely,

Principal