[School Letterhead]

[Date]

**Chickenpox (Varicella)**

Dear Parents/Guardians and Staff:

This letter is to notify you that some students attending [insert school name] have recently contracted chickenpox. Please review the following information for a description of the illness, how it is spread, and what you should do if your child develops chickenpox.

**Background**

Chickenpox is a very contagious infection caused by the varicella-zoster virus. It is spread from person to person by direct contact or through the air from an infected person’s coughing or sneezing. Chickenpox causes a blister-like rash, itching, tiredness, and fever lasting an average of 4 to 6 days. Most children recover without any medical treatment. Chickenpox can be spread for 1-2 days before the rash starts and until all blisters are crusted (about 4-6 days after rash appears) or no new lesions appear within a 24-hour period. It takes between 10-21 days after contact with an infected person to develop chickenpox. Most children now are vaccinated with at least one dose of varicella vaccine but because one dose of the vaccine is 80-85% effective at preventing chickenpox, it is not unusual to see breakthrough disease. Two doses of varicella vaccine are now routinely recommended for children.

**What should you do?**

The San Luis Obispo County Public Health Department strongly encourages you to have your child receive the varicella vaccine. Contact your healthcare provider to discuss whether you/your child should be vaccinated or call the San Luis Obispo County Public Health Department at 805-781-5500 to find out where you/your child can get vaccinated. Although vaccination now may be too late to prevent illness from this exposure, it can help prevent illness from future exposures.

If your child or anyone in your household currently has symptoms that look like chickenpox: Contact your regular health care provider to discuss your child's symptoms and to see if anyone in the home needs to be vaccinated. Contact the school nurse to report your child's chickenpox.

**Can my child return to childcare/school?**

Anyone who has chickenpox should avoid contact with others who have not had chickenpox or who are not vaccinated against chickenpox. They should not attend school, day care, work, parties and/or other gatherings until the blisters become crusted or no new lesions appear within a 24-hour period. Keep all chickenpox spots and blisters and other wounds clean and watch for possible signs of infection, including increasing redness, swelling, drainage and pain at the wound site.

If you or anyone else in your household has a weakened immune system or is pregnant and has never had chickenpox or the vaccine, talk with your doctor immediately. People who have previously had chickenpox or who have been vaccinated occasionally still get chickenpox. They usually have a milder illness without fever, bumps that may look like bug bits, which may not form blisters and might not be itchy. However, even these people with milder illness can still spread infection and should stay home until the rash is all dried up and at least 24 hours after new bumps have stopped appearing.

If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact [insert school point of contact name] or call [insert contact phone number].

[School Signature]