[School Letterhead]

[Date]

**Gastrointestinal Illness (GI)**

Dear Parents/Guardians and Staff:

Several students at [insert school/childcare center name] have come down with a gastrointestinal illness. Please review the following information to protect the health of your child and your family.

**Background**

Gastrointestinal illnesses are common in school settings where viruses and bacteria can be easily spread. Gastrointestinal illnesses can be spread from person to person, through contact with a contaminated surface, and even through food. An outbreak of gastrointestinal illness is defined as more people with vomiting or diarrhea than would typically be expected at the school during that time of year. Symptoms may include diarrhea, stomach cramps, vomiting, fever and headache.

**What should you do?**

There are important actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause gastrointestinal illnesses like norovirus.

* Wash your hands often with soap and warm water. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are less effective.
* Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
* Do not share personal items such as towels or utensils.
* Routinely clean items or surfaces that are touched frequently (with a bleach solution).
* If a child gets sick, have them stay home and limit contact with others within the house to keep from spreading the infection.
* If a child gets sick, do not allow them to return to school or participate in group activities for a minimum of 48 hours after symptoms have ended.

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

Students and staff with gastrointestinal illnesses (vomiting or diarrhea) should stay home and not attend classes or participate in other group activities for at least 48 hours after symptoms have resolved. (For example, if a child last vomited at noon on Tuesday, then they should not return to school until Friday). If symptoms become severe or if a child appears to be suffering from dehydration seek medical care immediately.

**At home wellness**

Some gastrointestinal illnesses are extremely contagious and may quickly spread to other members of a household. If other individuals within the home become sick, refrain from going to work, school and or events until 48 hours after symptoms have resolved. It is particularly important for parents/guardians that work in restaurants or as food handlers, in childcare settings, in congregate living facilities, or at schools to refrain from work until 48 hours after symptoms resolve to prevent the further spread of illness.

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

[School Signature]