[School Letterhead]

[Date]

**Hand, Foot, Mouth Disease (HFMD)**

Dear Parents/Guardians and Staff:

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

**Background**

Hand, Foot, and Mouth disease is a common illness of infants and children caused by viruses. The virus is found in the fluids from the nose, throat, skin blisters, and stool of an infected child. Another child becomes infected when hands, food, or toys contaminated with the virus are put into the mouth. A person is most contagious during the first week of illness, but the virus may be shed in the stool for weeks. It occurs mainly in children under 10 years old but may occur in older children and adults as well. It is most often seen in the summer or fall, though cases occur year-round.

It is not related to foot-and-mouth disease in animals and is only transmitted person to person. For almost all children the illness is mild. The disease can cause more severe infection in the form of meningitis or heart infection, but this is very rare. Symptoms include tiny blisters in the mouth and on the palms of the hands, soles of the feet, and buttocks. The illness may also include fever, sore throat, or cold symptoms. Mouth blisters may make eating or drinking difficult. An infected person may have none, some, or all of the symptoms. It usually takes 3-6 days after exposure for symptoms to begin. Symptoms are the worst in the first few days but are usually completely gone within 7-10 days. Early in the illness some children become dehydrated because of fever and mouth pain. If your child is showing signs of dehydration (fewer wet diapers or less urine than usual, more tired than normal, dizziness, dry tongue or lips, fewer tears), or have a severe headache or stiff neck, they need to be seen by a healthcare provider immediately.

**What should you do?**

* Wash your hands well and often with soap and warm water.
* Cover coughs and sneezes.
* Prevent sharing of food, drinks, and personal items that may touch the mouth.
* Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.

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

Since HFMD is normally mild, the San Luis Obispo County Public Health Department strongly encourages children to continue to go to school so long as they:

* Have no fever.
* Have no uncontrolled drooling with mouth sores.
* Feel well enough to participate in classroom activities.

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

[School Signature]