*[Replace this text with your organization’s identifier]*

*[FYI LETTER TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS]*

My name is ***[insert name].*** I am the Health Officer for ***[replace text with county name].***

We are here because a person at ***[replace with school name]*** was recently diagnosed with active tuberculosis disease. Tuberculosis, which is also called TB, is a disease that is caused by bacteria that are spread from person to person through the air. When someone is diagnosed with infectious TB disease, the Health Department identifies people who were exposed to the person with active TB.

The Health Department TB Control Program has been working closely with ***[replace with school name]*** officials to identify the students and staff who may have been exposed to the person with active TB. Individuals identified as contacts will be offered TB testing and follow-up in accordance with current public health guidelines. Those people who were exposed will be offered TB testing to find out if they have been infected with TB during school hours, as soon as we have ensured we have the right list of people, and all the arrangements are made.

The TB exposure occurred during ***[insert dates]*** and there is no risk of further exposure from this TB case.

You will hear more details about the testing procedure from one of our Public Health Nurses with the TB Control Program.

It’s important to know that **TB is treatable and curable**. It’s easier to treat when it is in the latent, or inactive form. What does that mean? Well, people who have **latent** TB infection have the TB bacteria in their bodies but are not sick because the bacteria are not active. They do not have symptoms of TB disease and cannot spread TB to others. However, in the future, they can develop **active** TB disease. That’s why the Health Department would like to find out if anyone has been infected with TB, so that they can receive treatment with TB antibiotics. This treatment will prevent them from developing active TB disease.

It’s also important to know that there is no further risk of exposure to the ***[replace with school name]*** community from this person with TB.

1. What is happening with the response? [from first paragraph of the Talking Points]

* ***[Insert name of public health department]*** Public Health Department has received information that a person at ***[replace with school name]*** was recently diagnosed with active tuberculosis (TB) disease.
* We are working closely with ***[replace with school name]*** officials to identify students and staff who may have been exposed to the person with active TB.
* Individuals identified as contacts will be offered TB testing and follow-up in accordance with current public health guidelines.

1. Why do you take TB cases seriously?

* People with TB disease in the lung or throat can spread the TB bacteria through the air when they cough, sneeze, speak, or sing. These bacteria can stay in the air for several hours, depending on the environment. Persons who breathe in the air containing the TB bacteria can become infected.
* It’s important to find people who could have been infected by a person with active TB so that they can receive treatment. TB infection can be cured with antibiotics.
* People with latent TB infection have TB germs in their bodies, but they are not sick because the germs are not active. They do not have symptoms of TB disease, and they cannot spread the TB bacteria to others. However, they may develop TB disease in the future and become quite sick. We want to prevent that from happening by finding people who are infected but not yet sick from TB and treating them.

1. Why is TB a serious illness?

* People with TB disease may feel weak, lose weight, have fever and night sweats. If TB disease affects the lungs, they may have coughing, chest pain, and cough up blood. TB disease can also affect any part of the body such as lymph nodes, liver, kidney, brain, spine, or bones.
* People with TB disease may need to be hospitalized and if they are infectious to others, may need to stay home from work or school for many days until they are no longer infectious.
* However, TB disease is curable.

1. What should other students and staff at the school do as precautions? How at risk are they? What do parents/guardians of students at the school need to be aware of?

* The health department is working with the school to identify which students and staff may have been exposed.
* Parents/guardians and staff will receive communication from the school about information sessions and TB testing dates and times.
* For students and staff who were not exposed no precautions are necessary. If testing needs to be expanded beyond the groups identified, parents/guardians and staff will be notified at that time.

1. Can you provide me with any specifics on the person with TB and how and why he/she was diagnosed?
   * Because of privacy laws, we cannot share specific information about the person with TB. The confidentiality of all individuals involved in the investigation is protected at all times.
2. Can someone be contagious before symptoms appear?
   * People with TB disease are most contagious when they have symptoms but, in some cases, they could be contagious before they are aware of symptoms. For that reason, public health investigates people who’ve been in contact with an infectious case prior to the appearance of symptoms.
3. Are people with TB disease put into isolation?
   * Not all TB disease is infectious. However, people with TB of the lungs or throat are carefully evaluated and monitored by their health care provider and by public health. If infectious, they are kept in isolation either at home or the hospital until they are shown to no longer be infectious. The time of isolation varies with each individual.
4. How is someone with TB disease treated?
   * The person is treated with multiple TB antibiotics, usually for 6 to 9 months, and almost all people with active TB disease are cured.
5. When are students screened for TB? Is it mandatory?
   * California state law mandates that students entering first grade should have a TB risk assessment and if they are determined to be at risk for TB infection or for developing active TB disease, they should get a TB test. ***[Insert name of public health department]*** County Public Health Department does not have any additional requirements.
   * Some school districts may require additional screening.
6. How common is it to be diagnosed? How common is it to have a person associated with a school diagnosed?

* ***[Quote local statistics]***

1. Why was there a delay in letting us know about this TB case?

* The TB patient was only recently diagnosed. However, individuals can be infectious before they feel very sick and before they see the doctor and get diagnosed. Therefore, the Health Department is cautious and looks for contacts who shared air space with that person for long periods of time several weeks before they started to get sick. And that is why we are looking back to students and staff who had contact with the ill person since ***[insert dates]***.

1. Why isn’t everyone at the high school being tested?

* TB doesn’t spread very easily from person-to-person. It takes prolonged contact with the person who is sick with active TB for the infection to spread. The health department carefully investigates the length of time that people were in contact with the ill person and the location where exposure could have occurred. It’s important to not perform unnecessary testing. Testing should be targeted to people who were possibly exposed.