LICE IN SCHOOLS

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HEAD LICE
According to the Department of Public Health (DPH), head lice are parasites roughly the size of a sesame seed. Lice eggs, called “nits,” are about half the size of adult lice. Itching is the major symptom of head lice infestation.

Head lice are typically transmitted through close contact or the use of common grooming supplies or hats. Nits cannot be washed out of the hair with standard shampoo.

For more information, see DPH’s fact sheet.

ISSUE
Summarize the state’s laws and procedures for how schools handle cases of head lice.

SUMMARY
There is no current law or regulation setting a statewide policy for schools when a student shows signs of head lice. According to the State Department of Education (SDE), local school districts set their own policy. School medical advisors may make recommendations for school policies related to head lice and school attendance by students with lice.

We searched bills and Public Acts from 1988 to the present and did not find any that addressed school policies for students with head lice. But in 2012, the legislature considered a bill (SB 19) that would have required certain health insurance policies that cover prescription drugs to cover those used to treat head lice. The Insurance and Real Estate Committee held a public hearing on the bill but did not vote it out of committee.

In practice, town policies differ on whether students with head lice are sent home and when they can return to school. Following are three examples.

1. Wallingford follows a “no nits” policy in which students showing signs of lice must be sent home for treatment and cannot return to school until (a) all lice eggs have been removed and (b) a parent signs a form stating that the student received proper treatment. The student should be treated again in seven days.
2. **Rocky Hill** excludes students from school who have live lice but allows them to return after treatment has begun. If only nits are discovered, the school notifies the parents but the student is not sent home, and the school nurse rechecks the student in seven to 10 days.

3. In 2014, **Fairfield** changed its lice protocol to reflect recommendations by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other specified health organizations. Under the current policy, students with live lice or nits are allowed to remain in school. After discovering lice on a student, the school informs the parents, who then decide whether the child should remain in school. The school nurse also checks the student’s siblings and close contacts for lice and follows up on the student’s treatment.

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