

Bed Bugs: School Response Guidelines

Background

In general, school environments are not conducive to bed bug infestations. Bed bugs prefer a setting where they can hide during the day and come out at night to feed on a sleeping host; they will, however, feed on a resting host during the daylight hours. Major bed bug infestations of schools are rare. However, schools can be transition sites for bed bugs that can hitchhike to and from the facility on personal items such as clothing or in backpacks. It is, therefore, prudent for schools to be watchful for bed bugs. There is no association between cleanliness and a bed bug infestation; anyone can experience a developing problem. Remember, bed bugs could be found on school staff and others, as well as students.

Schools with programs involving sleepovers, napping, and rest periods may provide the conditions suitable to support a bed bug population. If children in this type of setting are experiencing skin signs that might be associated with bed bug bites, investigate the classroom and common areas, and it may be necessary to contact parents/guardians.

Bed bug infestations are not only an individual family and school concern, but are also a concern for the entire community. Individuals have their respective responsibilities, but it is incumbent on the community itself to help its members to address such a pest problem.

While bed bugs do not transmit disease, they are a problematic because they are blood-feeding, human parasites. Once established in a home, these insects can cause physical and psychological symptoms, as well as present an additional economic investment to eradicate. The cost, anxiety, and lost instructional time at the school facility could be significant.

Recommendations

It is best to remain calm if a bed bug is reported and confirmed at school. Follow this list of recommendations and communicate only factual information.

A preventive appropriate response to bed bugs would include the following items:

- Follow the established Integrated Pest Management program for the school
- Provide educational information for all staff, students, families, and the community, such as posts on the school website and in newsletters.
- Identify community resources to assist in the educational process, such as local public health agencies, pest management professionals, community regulations, Iowa State University, and diagnostic clinics.
- Train staff on bed bugs and report and/or collect any unusual bugs in the classroom

If bed bugs are suspected:

- Have a pest management professional identify any bugs in question and report back to the school
- Maintain a list/log of insects identified to assess repetitive activity and rooms for inspection
- Students should not be excluded from attending school if a bed bug is found on them or in their belongings
- Respond promptly to bed bug complaints within the facility and by discussing the matter with the affected parents/guardians. Delayed action against bed bugs generally creates larger problems.

- Consider sending letters to other families in the classroom or school area if recommended by the pest management professional.

Roles and Responsibilities

Parents have the ultimate responsibility for their children. This includes:

- Providing a healthy, safe, and pest-free living environment for their children
- Promptly responding to bed bugs in the home for the health and safety of the family and the school community
- Assist in the prevention and management of bed bugs through:
 - Regular checks of the home, especially when bed bugs have been reported in their child's classroom
 - Reading information provided by the school on bed bugs
 - Making immediate arrangements for the inspection of their home when a bed bug problem is suspected
 - Taking the treatment recommendations of pest management professionals
- Consider physician assistance if extreme itching and possible skin conditions develop from reddened skin irritations, regardless of the suspected cause.

School communities have the responsibility for:

- Providing a healthy, safe, and pest-free environment for its students and staff
- Following a predetermined protocol to address children with evidence of bed bugs infestation in the home
- Inspecting the classroom where the bed bug was reported/found. A pest management professional or trained custodian should do the inspection.
- Decreasing clutter, discarded personal items (e.g., clothing), rugs, and upholstered furniture in classrooms and common areas.
- Cleaning thoroughly on a regular schedule with special attention to cracks, crevices, and furniture
- Laundering washables in hot, soapy water and drying on the highest heat setting (at least 120°F), if the school has access to these facilities and personnel to accomplish this task. If facilities are not available, school should seal the washables in a plastic bag and send home with the student.
- Treating (or contracting treatment by a pest management professional) an infested area if warranted
- Training (initial and as needed) of school staff on bed bug biology, identification, and how to be vigilant in looking for these and other problematic insects
- Providing information and help with current community resources about bed bugs to staff, parents, guardians, and other interested persons

Procedures to follow if a bed bug is found

If a bed bug is found or reported on an individual or their belongings in the facility, it does not mean the individual brought the insect into the school. Bed bugs do not infest people; they only feed on them. Bed bugs can crawl onto or off of a person (or their belongings) at any time. If a suspected bed bug is found on an individual, belongings, or anywhere else on the property, the following procedures should be followed:

- Discreetly remove the individual from the classroom to the health office. Have a school nurse or other qualified individual examine the clothing and belongings. Any bugs found should be removed and placed in rubbing alcohol or alcohol-based hand sanitizer in a sealed container for identification; alternatively, use a small piece of transparent tape to stick the bug to a 3 x 5 card. It is very important to confirm that the insect(s) are really bed bugs.
- Inform the individual's parents/guardians. The school nurse or administrator may contact the family, send a letter home, and/or provide educational materials and resource list. A check should be made to see if the individual has any siblings attending area schools. If so, these facilities should be notified of the bed bug find, and the school nurse should also check those students.
- Inspect the classroom and common areas. If additional specimens are found, thoroughly inspect these areas, looking for live or dead bed bugs, cast skins, eggs, and fecal droppings/smears.
- Students should not be excluded from the classroom due to bed bugs, nor should the facility be closed.
- Continue to monitor classrooms, common areas, and individuals for bed bugs or complaints of bug bites
- Communicate findings and successes with school staff and parents, as appropriate

For an individual that repeatedly comes to school with bed bugs

In a situation where an individual comes to the facility with bed bugs on a regular basis, it is important to institute a sanitation process.

- Consider that each situation will be somewhat unique, so assessments should be on a case-by-case basis
- In a bed bug infested home:
 - Parents/Guardians should store their child's freshly laundered clothing in sealed plastic bags in a place away from sleeping areas until they are put on in the morning. This greatly reduces the likelihood of bed bugs hiding in clothing and being carried to school.
 - Backpacks, lunch boxes, and other items that travel back and forth to school should be inspected daily. Place these items in sealed plastic containers in a place away from sleeping areas at home to prevent bed bugs from getting into them.
 - If the dwelling is a rental property, parents/guardians should be encouraged to contact the landlord or property management company
- At school (in the health office):
 - The student could be provided with plastic bags or bins in which to store their belongings in order to prevent any bed bugs from spreading in the school.
 - Having a set of clean clothing at the school for the student will facilitate a change of clothes while at school. If laundry facilities are available, the discarded clothes should be laundered in hot water and dried in a hot drier (120°F or higher) for at least 20 minutes to kill any bed bugs. The clothing should be stored in a sealed plastic bag until placed in the washing machine.

School staff working in partnership with community providers with knowledge of resources (Department of Human Services, local public health) may contact the parents/guardians to set up a time to discuss this issue further and/or set up a home visit or neutral acceptable location. Repeated bed bug presence may be due to the following:

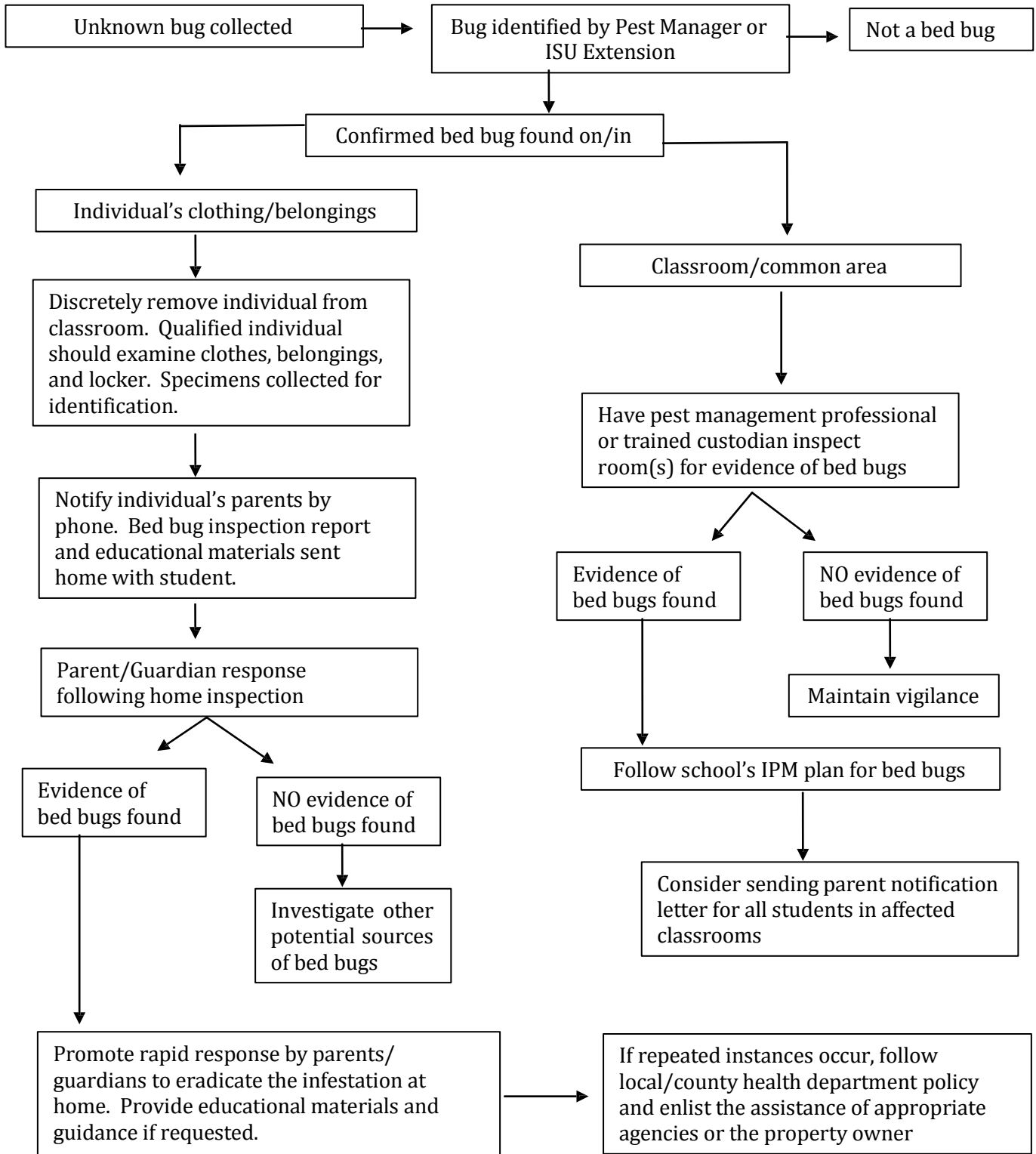
- Inability of the adults to recognize the scope of the infestation at home
- Failure to effectively treat a recognized infestation - this could be the result of pest management failure, landlord/tenant miscommunication, lack of financial resources, improper preparation for treatment, or repeated re-infestation of the home
- Failure to adhere to recommended clothing and backpack sanitation
- Infestation of vehicle(s) transporting the student
- Non-vigilance or lack of concern by adults in that home situation

Every effort should be made to assist the family with control of bed bugs. Other options may include:

- Consulting the city or county Department of Health
- Notifying Child Protective Services when neglect is suspected

Document prepared June 2011 by a subgroup of the Polk County Bed Bug Task Force. Modified from Michigan Manual for the Prevention and Control of Bed Bugs, Michigan Department of Community Health and Michigan Bed Bug Working Group, and the Monroe County Community School Corporation IPM Plan for Bed Bugs.

School Response Flowchart



Sample
Parent Notification Letter for Schools
(Use appropriate letterhead)

Dear Parent or Guardian:

Recently, bed bugs were identified in your child’s classroom. Bed bugs are a nuisance but their bites do not spread disease. Bed bugs are usually active at night and feed on human blood. The bite does not hurt at first but it may become swollen and itch, much like a mosquito bites. Watch for clusters of bites, usually in a line, on exposed areas of the body. If you have concerns for you or your child, please contact your doctor.

The source of bed bugs often cannot be determined, as bed bugs may be found in many places and can hitchhike from one place to another. Even though it is unlikely for bed bugs to infest schools, _____(add school district) will conduct an identification and inspection process. The school Integrated Pest Management Plan is being carried out in the area the bed bug was identified. _____(school name) will continue to be vigilant for additional bed bugs, provide thorough inspections of the facility, and have licensed pest management specialists assist with pest issues whenever they arise.

Contact your physician, school nurse or the _____(county or local) Health Department for proper care and treatment of bed bug bites.

It is recommended you inspect your home; information about bed bugs and an identification guide is enclosed to help you with this inspection. For rental properties, it is recommended that you contact your landlord or property management company.

If you need more information or have questions please do not hesitate to contact _____(email and/or phone number).

Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

**Sample
Bed Bug Inspection Report**
(Use appropriate letterhead)

Dear Parent,

Bed bugs have been identified on your child or in your child's belongings. While this does not necessarily mean that the bed bugs were brought to school by your child, it is important to your child's health and the education community that you inspect your home for signs of bed bugs.

Enclosed, you will find information about bed bugs and an identification guide to help you with your inspection. Once you have inspected your home, please fill out the form below and return it to the school office by _____. Please contact us for additional resources and information.

School Administration

I have been informed that bed bugs were found on my child or in their belongings at school. I understand that bed bugs pose a threat to my child's well-being and to the greater school community. I have read and understood the educational materials provided to me regarding bed bugs, and I have:

_____ carefully checked my family and home for signs of bed bug infestation

_____ notified my landlord/property management company (rental properties only)

_____ hired a pest management professional to check my family and home for signs of bed bug infestation.

Name of pest control company: _____

After completing a careful inspection, I certify that, to the best of my knowledge:

_____ I or a pest management professional found signs of bed bugs in my home, and I will take the following actions to eliminate this infestation:

_____ I or a pest management professional did not find signs of bed bugs in my home at this time. If I find evidence of bed bugs in the future, I will notify the school immediately and take action to address the infestation.

I understand that bed bugs can be spread to other homes if they are brought to school in backpacks, clothing, lunchboxes, or other belongings. I understand that if bed bugs are repeatedly found on my child or belongings, that the school may take additional actions to protect the school community from bed bugs.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Pest Management Professional: _____

Sample
Bed Bug Inspection Report
(Use appropriate letterhead)

Estimados padres de familia,

Se han identificado chinches en su niño o en sus pertenencias. Mientras esto necesariamente no significa que los chinches fueron traídos a la escuela por su niño, es importante por la salud de su niño y de la comunidad educativa que usted haga inspeccionar su casa por señales de chinches.

Adjunto, encontrara información sobre los chinches y una guía de identificación para ayudarle con la inspección. Una vez haya inspeccionado la casa, por favor llene la forma abajo y regrésela a la oficina de la escuela el _____. Por favor comuníquese con nosotros si necesita información adicional.

Administración de la Escuela

Me han informado que han encontrado chiches en mi niño o en sus pertenencias en la escuela. Yo entiendo que los chinches son una amenaza para el bienestar de mi niño y aun mayor para la comunidad escolar. Yo he leído y entendido los materiales educativos que me dieron sobre los chinches y yo he:

_____ examinado cuidadosamente mi familia y casa por señales de plaga de chinches

_____ notificado mi arrendatario/compañía de administración de propiedad (solo para propiedades arrendadas)

_____ contratado un administrador profesional de plagas para que revise mi familia y mi casa por señales de plaga de chinches

Nombre de la compañía del control de plagas: _____

Después de completar la inspección rigurosa, a mi conocimiento, yo certifico:

_____ Yo o la compañía de control de plagas encontró señales de chinches en mi casa, y yo tomare las siguientes instrucciones para eliminarlos:

_____ Yo o la compañía de control de plagas no encontró señales de chinches en mi casa en este momento. Si yo encuentro evidencia de chinches en el futuro, notificare a la escuela inmediatamente y tomare acciones para tratar la plaga.

Yo entiendo que los chinches se pueden desplegar a otras casas si ellos se traen a la escuela por medio de mochilas, ropa, lonchera y otras pertenencias. Yo entiendo que si se encuentra repetitivamente chinches en mi niño o en sus pertenencias, la escuela tomara acciones extras para proteger la comunidad escolar de los chinches.

Firma: _____ Fecha: _____

Profesional del Control de Plagas: _____

Pest Reporting Slip

Name: _____

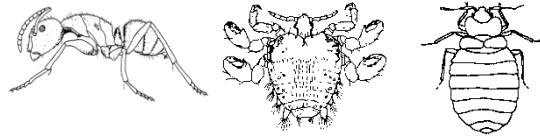
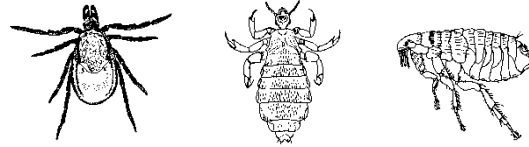
Date: _____

Time: _____

Number of _____ pests: _____

Where was the pest sighted?

Room: _____ Location in room: _____



*Use tweezers to pick up unknown bug, then put in a screw top bottle/jar. Add rubbing alcohol or hand sanitizer (alcohol-based). Seal top on container.

**Another collection method is to use one piece of transparent tape and stick the bug to a 3 x 5 index card. Place card in an envelope and seal.

Pest Reporting Slip

Name: _____

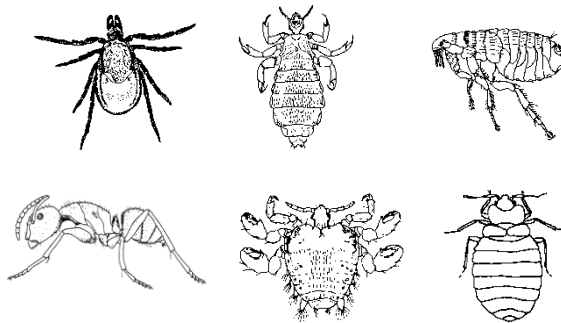
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