# [school letterhead]

[Date]

**Potential Exposure to Chickenpox**

Dear Staff, Student, or Parent/Legal Guardian,

We are writing to inform you about a possible exposure to chickenpox (also known as varicella) at [school/childcare] in [grade level or classroom name]. Exposures may have occurred on [date(s)]. Although not usually serious, chickenpox can be severe when the rash becomes infected with bacteria, and is **especially serious for infants, pregnant women, and children and adults with compromised immune systems** (for example, from cancer chemotherapy, high dose steroid therapy for asthma, or HIV). For more information, please refer to the enclosed chickenpox fact sheet.

We are sharing the following information and recommendations to reduce further transmission of chickenpox in our school community:

* **If chickenpox develops, keep your child home and notify the school.** Children may return to school when all pox have dried to a hard scab. Try to minimize scratching and touching the lesions. Comfort can be provided with calamine or caladryl lotions for itching. Tylenol can be given for fever (**do not give children aspirin**). Watch for complications such as ear infections and pneumonia. Teach children the importance of good hand hygiene and washing hands often.
* Unvaccinated siblings of a chickenpox case should also remain home from school for 21 days following their last exposure, as they are at greatest risk of developing chickenpox.
* **Make sure vaccinations are up to date.** Immunization is the best way to reduce the risk of infection. All healthy children should receive their first dose of varicella vaccine between 12-15 months of age, followed by a second dose between 4-6 years of age. Contact your health care provider to get immunized as soon as possible. If your child is not already immune to chickenpox, varicella vaccine given within 3 days of exposure can possibly prevent chickenpox. Vaccination 3 to 5 days after exposure probably won't prevent chickenpox, but it may make the illness less severe.
* Pregnant women and those with compromised immune systems should talk to their health care provider to discuss the best ways to protect themselves from chickenpox.
* If additional cases of chickenpox occur at [school name], we may exclude children who do not have at least one dose of chickenpox vaccine or other evidence of immunity to chickenpox for a period of 21 days following the last exposure.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call [school contact] at [phone number].