To: All SFUSD Administrators, Teachers, and Counselors

From: Mayor Edwin Lee

Date: May 8, 2012

RE: Important Protocol for Needle Stick

Recently, a student in Oakland experienced a needle prick from a potentially infected syringe found while digging in the dirt on his schoolyard. The 7-year old boy is undergoing preventive treatment for HIV and hepatitis as a precaution. This incident was alarming and concerning. I contacted our Department of Public Health for advice to help prevent and prepare our schools should this unfortunate accident occur in our city.

This memo is intended to provide San Francisco School District officials and staff with information on the appropriate response to accidental injuries to students from used medical sharps equipment, including needle sticks. Sharps are any medical equipment or supplies that can cause skin injury. Cuts or injuries from used sharps have the potential to cause infection by blood borne pathogens, including Hepatitis B virus, Hepatitis C virus, and HIV. If a student is injured by a needle stick or other sharp, please refer to the protocol below for appropriate initial management. All students with such injuries should be evaluated by a medical provider as soon as possible.

Fortunately, infections due to sharps injury are rare and may not happen even with exposure to a used sharp that is contaminated with a blood borne pathogen. Most exposures and infections after sharps injuries occur in health care workers, but infections can occur in anyone injured by a needle or other sharp. Also, it may be difficult or impossible to know if a used sharp is contaminated. In some cases, medication or vaccinations may be recommended following a sharps injury, but this must be determined by a trained medical provider. These treatments are often collectively referred to as “Post-Exposure Prophylaxis,” or simply “PEP.” Laboratory work may also be recommended. PEP evaluations are time-sensitive and should happen as soon as possible after the injury. Most clinics, urgent care centers, and emergency rooms can perform PEP evaluations, and PEP hotlines are available to assist the providers. If needed, the Department of Public Health provides PEP evaluations at the San Francisco General Hospital Urgent Care Clinic and the Emergency Department at 1001 Potrero Avenue.

In order to prevent injuries from sharps, schools should ensure that appropriate procedures are followed to keep facilities and grounds clean and well maintained. Students and staff should be advised not to touch any needle or other piece of used medical equipment found on school grounds, and to stay away from any such material. Staff should telephone 3-1-1 (city general hotline) and arrange to have a Department of Public Works employee come to remove the item. Of note, San Francisco has a well-
established program for safe disposal of needles that is designed to prevent needles from being left in public spaces where they may cause injury.

Infections due to sharps injuries are rare. Appropriate responses by school district personnel can further reduce risk and help preserve the health and safety of our students. Thank you for sharing this information with your school and keeping our children safe and healthy.

**Protocol for management of sharps injury, including needle stick**

- Immediately wash the affected area thoroughly with soap and water
  - Do not inject disinfectants or caustics (e.g. bleach) into the wound
  - There is no evidence to support stimulation of bleeding
- Seek medical attention right away
  - If SFUSD student injured: contact parents/guardians by phone or registered letter
  - If SFUSD staff injured: Call Needlestick/Exposure Hotline 469-4411
  - Medications, vaccinations and laboratory work may be recommended
  - Most clinics, urgent care centers, and emergency rooms can evaluate these injuries
  - The San Francisco General Hospital Urgent Care Clinic or Emergency Department at 1001 Potrero Avenue can evaluate injuries, if other care is not available
- Record the details of the exposure
  - When, where and how it occurred
  - Affected site on the body
  - Type of sharp involved (e.g. syringe, scalpel, broken test tube, or other device)
  - Amount of blood or other visible material on the sharp
  - Any available information on the source patient (the person who originally used the sharp), including health status
  - The exposure details will be useful to the medical provider evaluating the risk of exposure to any blood borne pathogens
- Sharp disposal
  - DO NOT touch or dispose of the sharp yourself
  - Keep the area clear of students and staff
  - Call 3-1-1 (city general hotline) and a city worker will be assigned to come out and collect and dispose of the sharp safely
- Notify your supervisor and complete paperwork
  - If SFUSD Student injured – Site administrator notifies his/her supervisor and completes Injury Report Form
  - If SFUSD Staff injured – If advised by Needlestick/Exposure Hotline to see Occupational Health Services, have site administrator complete Worker’s Compensation form.