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To whom it may concern,

April 24, 2019

This is a letter to update you on the status of response at North Park Montessori to determine past exposure to asbestos, lead, and silica after construction activities disturbed asbestos containing materials.

**What has occurred since our last meeting?**

We were informed on March 15<sup>th</sup> that MicroAir performed aggressive sampling of the air and dust on February 16 and 17, 2019. This sampling was not done to assess exposure. MDHHS and KCHD did not give input into that sampling process as we were not aware that the sampling had occurred. After reviewing the situation with national asbestos technical experts from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), we have concluded that the sampling has significantly disturbed the environment in the school to a point where further sampling would no longer provide information to assess past exposure to asbestos, lead, and silica. Sampling at this point might give a false sense of security about the past and not accurately represent the exposures that more than likely have occurred.

**What testing was done at the school?**

The wall plaster was sampled directly by MicroAir, Nova Environmental, MDEQ and MIOSHA to determine where asbestos material was in the school. In addition, 27 air and 4 dust wipe samples were collected mostly in the central area of the school with the most visible dust. A detailed report with interpretation of these samples will be provided by MDHHS.

Briefly, detection of up to 1% chrysotile asbestos in the plaster was limited to the 1908 section of the building which consists of the front entrance, offices, gymnasium, and second floor classrooms. Asbestos fibers were also detected in the dust and air samples of the main entry and gymnasium. No asbestos was detected in 2 of the 4 dust wipe samples or in 25 of the 27 air samples, including those taken in classrooms.

Lead-based paint was detected in 2 out of 11 samples taken. Quartz (the source of silica) was detected in most of the plaster throughout the school. Exposure to these substances has also likely occurred given the widespread nature of the construction activities.

**What does this mean for the health of students and staff?**

Students and staff of North Park Montessori were likely exposed to asbestos and silica from November 21, 2018 to February 15, 2019 from contact with construction dust. We cannot determine how much of an exposure there has been to either of those materials.

While the risk for future health problems is expected to be low given the non-occupational exposure for a short period of time, the actual risk is unknown. Please see the attached fact sheet for more information on health problems associated with asbestos exposure.

There is no testing or imaging such as a chest x-ray that can be done now or in the near future for children to see if a child has inhaled or consumed fibers or dust containing silica. Adults who may have other health issues including lung problems should discuss this exposure with their healthcare providers to determine if further testing would be indicated.

Lead-based paint was noted to be present in 2 out of 11 samples. This does not pose a health risk unless students have ingested the paint dust. None of the children who had lead testing done in the several weeks after the school closed had elevated levels of lead. If you are concerned about lead exposure, you can have your child tested at the Kent County health department or at the doctor's office.

We suggest that this exposure be included in the medical history of those who have been exposed and encourage this to be mentioned to healthcare providers of both students and staff.

### **What should students and staff do to minimize their risks of health problems from asbestos or silica?**

Limiting exposure to tobacco smoke and regular physical activity are important in keeping the lungs healthy.

We recognize that the uncertainty of this situation can contribute to anxiety and depression. If you are concerned about the emotional or mental wellbeing of those who have been exposed or their family members, we encourage the use of mental health providers.

### **What do I tell my doctor?**

Guidance and detail on the exposure at North Park which can be shared with your healthcare providers. This document will be provided through the Kent County health department website at:

[https://www.accesskent.com/Health/north\\_park\\_montessori.htm](https://www.accesskent.com/Health/north_park_montessori.htm)

### **Why has a recreation of the construction not been done to better understand the exposure?**

Assessing the school's levels on the day it was closed was going to provide the most realistic assessment of exposure, even though it would not provide a complete assessment of the entire exposure duration.

Recreation of conditions or sampling during future construction while cutting the walls are not recommended to get a better estimate of past exposures. Cutting into the plaster now with the same methods as past construction would be a violation of the law as it now has been identified as asbestos containing material. This cannot be directed by KCHD or MDHHS. Sampling during future construction would lead to different results as methods to contain material release will now need to be followed and cutting performed by an asbestos removal professional.

Results of these samplings would not change the overall recommendations made to protect your long-term health.

## Will a registry be created to track the health of those who have been exposed?

KCHD and MDHHS do not recommend long-term health surveillance in the form of a registry for those exposed. The best course forward to protect the long-term health for all exposed is to talk to your doctor about a monitoring solution that fits your specific health needs. In addition to the letter that you can provide to your provider, providers can contact MDHHS or KCHD to discuss the exposure in more detail if desired.

KCHD and MDHHS can collect contact information for those interested and provide updates if our understanding of the health risks associated with asbestos and silica exposure changes and how they might apply to North Park occupants. We can provide this service to interested individuals for the next 5 years. We will have more details available in 2-3 weeks.

## How do I get more information?

MDHHS is in the process of compiling a detailed report which will be released to the public in the next 2-3 weeks. KCHD and MDHHS will host a parent/guardian meeting once the report has been completed to answer questions.

## What happens next?

Nova Environmental, a certified asbestos project designer, has been hired by GRPS to clean the school. Future construction involving sawing into or otherwise disturbing the asbestos containing plaster will need to be done by a certified asbestos project designer and requires measures to prevent the spread of construction dust. After completion, clearance testing is required to ensure no asbestos remains in the environment.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the MDHHS TOXICS hotline at **1-(800)-648-6942**. You can contact the Kent County Health Department at **(616) 632-7280** and leave a message. We will return your call as soon as we are able to do so. The Pediatric Environmental Health Unit for region 5 can also be contacted at **1-(866) 967-7337** or [ChildrensEnviro@uic.edu](mailto:ChildrensEnviro@uic.edu) with specific question on health information for children.

Sincerely,



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