October 6, 2020

Sheldon Berkowitz, MD, FAAP
President, Minnesota Chapter
American Academy of Pediatrics

Dear Dr. Berkowitz and Colleagues of the Minnesota Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics,

The Minnesota Department of Health has received reports from healthcare providers of instances where they have been asked by patients to re-assess a close contact determination that has been made by public health, usually due to disagreement with recommendations for isolation or quarantine.

During a case or outbreak investigation, MDH, local public health, Tribal Health and school teams all work together to make these close contact determinations, based on a careful investigation and risk assessment. When people disagree with these determinations and seek to obtain their own assessment from a provider who may not be aware of all details of the situation, any resulting discrepancies can cause significant confusion and undermine the work of public health officials when this alternative assessment is cited as reason not to comply with isolation or quarantine recommendations. Isolation and quarantine are typically voluntary and MDH takes great care to have fair and consistent criteria in use across the state in all settings (e.g., community, workplace, schools), except where additional guidance applies (e.g., healthcare workers, essential settings).

MDH asks that if providers receive these requests, they should decline to provide a close contact determination and instead refer patients to MDH guidance and encourage compliance with public health recommendations. Further information on the contact tracing process at MDH can be found here: https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/tracing.html and additional information on case management and close contact determination in the school setting can be found here: https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/casehandle.pdf. Clinician enquiries for individual cases may be directed via email to health.schools.covid19@state.mn.us
Thank you all very much,

Sincerely,

Ruth Lynfield, MD
Sarah Lim, MD

Minnesota Department of Health
625 Robert Street
St Paul, MN 55155