



**SENIOR DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION – P-16**  
Office of Elementary, Middle, Secondary and Continuing Education  
Office of Higher Education

October 2007

To: District Superintendents  
Superintendents of Schools  
Administrators of Charter and Nonpublic Schools

From: Johanna Duncan-Poitier  
Senior Deputy Commissioner of Education-P-16

Subject: Updated Information Regarding Alcohol-Based Sanitizers

We are writing to inform you of an emergency exemption to the requirements concerning administration of over-the-counter medication in school settings.

In April 2002, the State Education Department sent out a guidance memo titled “Administration of Medications in the School Setting.” This memo may be viewed at <http://www.schoolhealthservicesny.com/uploads/AdminMed.pdf>. This memo states that a written order from a duly licensed prescriber and written parental permission is required to administer nonprescription (over-the-counter) medication to students in the school setting. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are considered over-the-counter drugs by the United States Food and Drug Administration.

Recently there has been an increase in MRSA (Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus) cases reported in schools. Careful hand-washing and sanitation is the most effective way to control the spread of MRSA.

Effective immediately, School Medical Directors may approve and permit the use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers for use in their facilities without a physician’s order. Parents may provide written notification to the school if they do not wish to have their child use this product. If hand sanitizers are made available, students should use them under adult supervision. It is recommended that hand sanitizers should be used where traditional soap and water is not readily accessible.

Please note that hand sanitizers which contain alcohol are flammable. They should not be placed in hallways or near an open flame or source of sparks. If you require further guidance please contact your BOCES health and safety staff, the Facilities Planning Unit in the State Education Department, or the Fire Prevention Bureau of the State Office of Fire Prevention and Control.

For a fact sheet on alcohol-based hand sanitizers, please visit the New York Statewide School Health Services Center’s website at [www.schoolhealthservicesny.com/](http://www.schoolhealthservicesny.com/). For additional information, please contact the: Statewide School Health Services Center, (518) 349-7630.