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## PRESS RELEASE

### Ministry of Health & Wellness Advises on Meningitis Case

*Belmopan, December 6, 2023.*

The Ministry of Health and Wellness (MOHW) formally informs the public of a child diagnosed with bacterial meningitis. This child resides in Belmopan and attends United Evergreen Primary School.

This child became symptomatic on November 30 and became progressively unwell on December 3. The child was found to have symptoms of meningitis and this was confirmed by clinical and laboratory tests.

The preliminary results show that the child has pneumococcal meningitis, where the causative organism is streptococcus pneumonia. This is a bacterium that exists in nasal passages and may or may not cause disease. It is an organism that can cause a wide array of infections like pneumonia and meningitis.

Today, the MOHW became aware of another child with clinical symptoms of meningitis who was taken to the Western Regional Hospital. This child also resides in Belmopan and attends St. Ann's Anglican Primary School. Laboratory tests have been conducted, and the results are awaited to confirm this diagnosis.

The MOHW and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology (MoECST) are working closely with the respective schools to ensure that all infectious control guidelines and practices are being taken. In addition, the MOHW is currently conducting surveillance interviews with families and friends of those who may have come in contact with both children to determine whether other persons are exhibiting symptoms.

It is important to note that guidelines for the management of pneumococcal meningitis state that routine prophylactic management is not recommended; however, the country should make the final decision on

prophylaxis depending on various factors, including the detection of cluster cases.

The MOHW has issued guidelines to the MoECST and both schools as follows:

- Infection, prevention, and control procedures should be taken in the affected classrooms.
- Hand washing techniques and other infection control procedures should be increased.
- Students of the affected classes should remain home until sanitization is completed.
- Classmates and children in the schools should be observed for any signs of fever, headache, or vomiting.
- Medical care should be sought immediately if any close contacts have any concerning symptoms.
- Sick persons should stay at home, observe proper hand-washing techniques and use face masks.

The MOHW public health team for Central Health and Western Health Regions is continuing its investigations and visiting the schools and families of the close contacts. The MOHW and MoECST will keep the public informed of any significant changes.

The MOHW and MoECST affirm that the priority is for the well-being of the children and their contacts. Both ministries are working together to ensure that there is effective communication between teachers and parents and that infection, prevention and control procedures are in place.

Please feel free to contact the MOHW and the MoECST for any further information or advice.

**Ends**