**<Customize this letter by adding your organization’s letterhead, contact information, and a paragraph of specific protocols if applicable. For example, if you exclude symptomatic children from your camps, or if you have a nurse on staff, you may wish to mention that. You may not remove or alter the existing text. Remove these directions before printing/sending.>**

**Keep Campers Safe from Mumps**

June 2017

Dear Parent or Guardian,

As a parent, there is nothing more important than safeguarding your child’s health. That’s why you should know the facts about mumps and the vaccine that protects against it. Our state is currently experiencing a mumps outbreak. We have had nearly 900 cases since the start of the outbreak in October 2016. Children, teens, and adults need to make sure they’re up to date with all recommended doses of MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) vaccine for the best protection. **Please check to make sure your kids are fully vaccinated before they attend summer events or camps.**

**What is mumps?**

Mumps is a contagious disease caused by a virus. It can happen any time of the year, and can cause long-term health problems, such as hearing loss and brain damage. It’s mostly spread by coughing or sneezing, or other contact with saliva from someone who is infected. It is as contagious as flu. People with mumps usually are contagious before symptoms appear and for a few days after, so those who are infected can spread it without realizing it. Adults are more likely than children to become very sick with mumps. There is no treatment for mumps, but there is prevention in the form of a vaccine.

**How can I protect my child from mumps?**

The best tool for protection is the MMR vaccine, which protects against measles, mumps, and rubella. In addition to the vaccine, make sure that your child washes his/her hands, covers his/her coughs and sneezes, and stays home and away from others when sick. If you suspect that your child has mumps, call your healthcare provider immediately. If you don’t have a clinic or doctor, call the Family Health Hotline at 1-800-322-2588 or go to [ParentHelp123.org](http://www.parenthelp123.org/) to find a provider or immunization clinic.

**Who should get the vaccine and when should they get it?**

Children should get 1 dose of MMR vaccine at 12 to 15 months old and a second dose at 4 to 6 years old. Anyone older than this with fewer than 2 doses should be encouraged to see their healthcare provider to get up to date on their MMR vaccine. It’s important for children to get vaccinated on time to protect themselves, and any younger siblings who may still be too young to receive the vaccine.

**Where can I find the MMR vaccine?**

Ask your doctor, nurse, or local health department to find out more about the MMR vaccine and where you can get it. Washington provides all recommended vaccines at no cost for kids through age 18, available from providers across the state. Providers may charge an office visit fee and an administration fee to give the vaccine. People who can’t afford the administration fee can ask to have it waived. Call the Family Health Hotline at 1-800-322-2588 or go to [ParentHelp123](http://www.parenthelp123.org/) to find a healthcare provider or immunization clinic.

**<Place your custom text here if you wish. Delete this line if you are not adding anything.>**

For more information, visit the Washington State Department of Health at [www.doh.wa.gov/mumps](http://www.doh.wa.gov/mumps). Content for this letter was provided by the Washington State Department of Health, Office of Immunization and Child Profile.

Sincerely,

**<Replace this line with your organization’s contact information/signature.>**