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To: District Superintendents
Superintendents of Public and Nonpublic Schools
Charter School Administrators
School Health Personnel

From: Anita Murphy 

Subject: Review of Code of Conduct to Include Synthetic Cannabinoids (Marijuana) as
Illegal Substances

The Commissioner of the New York State Department of Health (DOH) recently issued an Order for Summary Action regarding synthetic cannabinoids. These products are produced, distributed, marketed, and sold as legal alternatives to marijuana and often carry a label stating “not for human consumption” to disguise the true nature of the substance. Synthetic cannabinoid products are sold as incense, herbal mixtures, or potpourri. They are often sold in convenience stores, gas stations, and smoke shops. These products are commonly smoked and often cause significant negative health effects such as acute renal failure, effects on the cardiovascular system and/or central nervous system, and death. Calls to the New York State Poison Control Center regarding these substances have increased dramatically in 2012.

More detailed information on synthetic cannabinoids, as well as the Commissioner of Health’s Order for Summary Action, can be found at:
http://www.health.ny.gov/press/releases/2012/2012-03-29_synthetic_marijuana.htm and at
http://www.health.ny.gov/press/releases/2012/2012-03-23_dangers_of_synthetic_marijuana.htm.

In light of this important health and safety information, the New York State Education Department is urging school districts to review their codes of conduct in consultation with school district attorneys, to ensure that districts will be able to protect students by taking appropriate disciplinary action against those who possess synthetic cannabinoids on school property or at school functions or distribute synthetic cannabinoids to students.