

Palo Alto boy returns to school after DNA flap

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PALO ALTO, Calif. (AP) — A California sixth-grader was allowed to return to his middle school after his family convinced district officials they didn't need to worry about his genes.

A month ago, Palo Alto Unified School District officials told 11-year-old Colman Chadam he must transfer out of Jordan Middle School.

Colman has genetic mutations related to cystic fibrosis but not the disease itself.

Still, district officials believed he posed a threat to students who have the disease because people with cystic fibrosis can make each other sick.

Colman started school in the district this fall then was asked to transfer after his parents voluntarily disclosed his genetic information.

District officials and Colman's family announced a settlement on Monday that revoked the forced transfer to another district school and allowed the boy to return to classes last week after missing 11 days, the San Francisco Chronicle (<http://bit.ly/VRcSnd>) reported.

Cystic fibrosis is not contagious, but people with the disease can carry bacteria that can be dangerous to others who have the condition.

After Colman was ordered to leave school, his parents took the district to court. A hearing scheduled for late October was delayed so the two sides could negotiate a settlement.

Colman's mother, Jennifer Chadam, said her son is settling back into school with his new teachers and classmates.

"This has taken a toll on him; it really has," Chadam said. "He is a funny, artistic kid. I felt (the forced transfer) was going to change the course of his life."

Colman agreed to switch classes to make sure he didn't come into contact or share facilities with two children at the school with cystic fibrosis, even though his parents didn't think the protocols were necessary.

"After careful consideration, which included further consultation with a medical expert, the students are attending the same school, and the (district) is following the recommendation of implementing cystic fibrosis cross-infection protocols," said Charles Young, district associate superintendent.

Colman's case illustrates the benefits and problems of genetic screening, said Stephen Jaffe, the Chadams' attorney.

"I think Colman going to back to school is a victory for common sense," he said.

Information from: San Francisco Chronicle, <http://www.sfgate.com>

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