

AIDS victim worries over missing class

By John Norberg

Journal and Courier

KOKOMO — J.O. Smith, Western School superintendent, is at a loss for words.

"You tell me," he said Wednesday afternoon. "What would you do?"

Smith is superintendent in the school system where Ryan White, 13, attends seventh-grade.

Ryan has AIDS, or Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome — a disease that's caused panic throughout the world.

And until Smith can get some answers, Ryan cannot attend school.

Ryan and his mother, Jeanne White, claim he contracted AIDS through blood products he receives for hemophilia. They've filed a \$2 million suit in Lafayette federal court against the company that makes a blood clotting agent Ryan takes at least twice a week.

The company, Hyland Therapeutics Division of Travenol Laboratories Inc. in Glendale, Calif., has declined comment.

The suit the Whites have filed is different from the one filed on behalf of Lafayette AIDS victim Amy Sloan, 23.

White and Sloan are the only Hoosiers thought to have contracted AIDS through blood or blood products, their lawyer, Charles Vaughan, said.

Sloan believes she contracted AIDS through a blood transfu-



By Tom Campbell

LOOKING FOR ANSWERS: Ryan White and his mother, Jeanne, have filed a \$2 million suit.

sion, which is exempt from Indiana product liability laws. Ryan says he contracted AIDS through a blood product, which is not exempt.

Ryan was hospitalized for several weeks in December and January. He's home now, but he's worried he might have to take seventh-grade over again. He hasn't attended school since Dec. 7.

Ryan said he feels fine, but he appeared weak and had a cold. Smith said he doesn't think the boy feels well enough to come back to school yet.

Smith also said there are no precedents for this in Indiana.

"What do you do with a child

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who has AIDS?" he said. "We are attempting to do something. What we're attempting to do is set up home instruction.

"But there's such a fear of that disease. You have difficulty finding people to work with him."

There are other fears. If he's allowed to return to class, what about the safety of other students? Even though physicians say there's no danger, how will parents react? Will Ryan be exposed to other sickness common among school children but

which could cause him serious problems?

"I don't know," Smith said. "We've asked the State Board of Health. We're expecting something from them. But nobody has anything to go by. Everybody wants to know what they're doing in other places. But we don't have any precedent for this."

Ryan's mother is also worried about sicknesses he might be exposed to.

Still, "they said he'll probably have to take the seventh-grade over again," she said. "Ryan is very, very smart. The doctor said there's no reason why he can't go back to school."