



August 18, 2009

Dear County and District Superintendents and Charter School Administrators:

CDC ISSUES NEW GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOL RESPONSES TO INFLUENZA

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has released new guidance intended to help public health officials and school administrators respond to influenza during the 2009-2010 school year. The guidance is designed to decrease exposure to regular seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu while limiting the disruption of day-to-day activities and the vital learning that goes on in schools. The full report is available on the CDC Flu Web site at <http://www.flu.gov/plan/school/schoolguidance.html> (Outside Source). I hope that you will review this information and share these recommendations with staff and parents.

The following are key recommendations from the CDC:

- **Stay home when sick:** Staff and students with flu-like illness should stay home for at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever, or signs of a fever, without the use of fever-reducing medicines.
- **Separate ill students and staff:** Students and staff who appear to have flu-like illness should be sent to a room separate from others until they can be sent home. CDC recommends that they wear a surgical mask, if possible, and those who care for ill students and staff wear protective gear such as a mask.
- **Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette:** Wash hands frequently with soap and water when possible, and cover noses and mouths with a tissue when coughing or sneezing (or a shirt sleeve or elbow if no tissue is available).
- **Routine cleaning:** School staff should routinely clean areas that students and staff touch often with the cleaners they typically use. Special cleaning with bleach and other non-detergent-based cleaners is not necessary.
- **Early treatment of high-risk students and staff:** People at high risk for influenza complications who become ill with influenza-like illness should speak with their health care provider as soon as possible. Early treatment with antiviral medications is very important for people at high risk because it can prevent hospitalizations and deaths. People at high risk include those who are pregnant,

August 18, 2009
Page 2

have asthma or diabetes, have compromised immune systems, or have neuromuscular diseases.

Consideration of selective school dismissal: Although there are not many schools where all or most students are at high risk (for example, schools for medically fragile children or for pregnant students), a community might decide to dismiss such a school to better protect these high-risk students.

The guidance also provides additional interventions that school officials should consider in conjunction with a public health officer if the severity and impact of the H1N1 increases. The guidance does emphasize that collaboration between public health and education is essential in responding effectively to an influenza outbreak, and I urge all local educational agencies to work closely with their local health officers in the event of an influenza outbreak.

The California Department of Education (CDE) is working closely with the CDC, the U.S. Department of Education, and the California Department of Public Health and remain committed to doing all we can to prepare and protect our school communities as the fall flu season approaches. I would also like to remind you that the CDE has a variety of resources to help schools and child care agencies prepare for and prevent the spread of pandemic influenza. These resources are available in multiple languages on the CDE Influenza Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/hn/fluinfo.asp>.

Finally, because frequent hand washing is such a critical part of our influenza mitigation effort, I urge you to ensure that soap and water and/or hand sanitizers are available for both students and staff at all school sites and district offices.

If you have any questions regarding this subject, please contact Linda Davis-Alldritt, School Nurse Consultant, School Health Connections & Healthy Start Office, at 916-319-0914 or by e-mail at SchoolHealth@cde.ca.gov.

Sincerely,



JACK O'CONNELL

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