



TO: Washtenaw County Superintendents

FROM: Diana Torres-Burgos, MD, MPH
Medical Director

DATE: May 21, 2009

SUBJECT: School Closure Guidelines Update

Washtenaw County Public Health Department is working to keep you updated on the current H1N1 flu situation. We currently have 15 confirmed cases in Washtenaw County. In addition, regular seasonal influenza is also circulating in our community. The symptoms of H1N1 are similar to seasonal human influenza.

As of May 20, 2009, more than 5710 confirmed and probable cases of novel influenza A (H1N1) have been reported from 48 states, including Washington DC, with numerous disease clusters, indicating spread within communities that makes individual school and child care program closure less effective as a control measure. Most U.S. cases have not been severe and are comparable in severity to seasonal influenza.

At this time, CDC recommends the primary means to reduce spread of influenza in schools and child care programs is to focus on early identification of ill students and staff, staying home when ill and good cough and hand hygiene etiquette. Even if a school is closed for an extended period of time, both children and adults are still susceptible to flu if they have interactions with other people, some of whom may be shedding flu viruses even though they do not have symptoms.

Parents should be advised that when their school age child is sick enough to stay home with a flu-like illness, to report this illness immediately to their school attendance office. This will aid the schools when they send the weekly disease report to Washtenaw County Public Health Department. These reports assist the health department as we monitor illness trends in the community.

Current CDC Recommendations for K-12:

- School and child care program closure is not advised for a suspected or confirmed case of novel influenza A (H1N1) and, in general, is not advised unless there is a magnitude of faculty or student absenteeism that interferes with the school or child care program's ability to function.
- Students, faculty or staff with influenza-like illness (fever with a cough or sore throat) should stay home and not attend school or child care programs, or go into the community except to seek medical care for at least 7 days even if symptoms resolve sooner.

- Students, faculty and staff who are still sick 7 days after they become ill should continue to stay home from school and child care programs until at least 24 hours after symptoms have resolved.
- Students, faculty and staff who appear to have an influenza-like illness at arrival or become ill during the day should be isolated promptly in a room separate from other students and sent home.
- Parents and guardians should monitor their school-aged children, and faculty and staff should self-monitor every morning for symptoms of influenza-like illness.
- Ill students should not attend alternative child care or congregate in public settings.
- School and child care program administrators should communicate regularly with local public health officials to obtain guidance about reporting of influenza-like illnesses in the school or child care program.
- Schools and child care programs can help serve as a focus for educational activities aimed at promoting ways to reduce the spread of influenza, including hand hygiene and cough etiquette.
- Students, faculty and staff should stringently follow sanitary measures to reduce the spread of influenza, including covering their nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing (or coughing or sneezing into their sleeve if a tissue isn't available), frequently washing hands with soap and water, or using hand sanitizer if hand washing with soap and water is not possible.

Washtenaw County Public Health Department, in collaboration with CDC and state health officials, will continue to closely monitor the severity and spread of this novel H1N1 influenza outbreak. If you have questions or concerns, please contact us at (734)544-6770.

Useful websites regarding Influenza A H1N1 (Swine Influenza):

Washtenaw County Public Health Department:

http://www.ewashtenaw.org/government/departments/public_health

Michigan Department of Community Health:

http://www.michigan.gov/mdch/1,1607,7-132-2940_2955_22779_53388-213600--,00.html

Centers for Disease Control:

www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/