Date

Dear Parents and Guardians:

Pandemic H1N1 Flu (Swine Flu) Information for Parents

The new H1N1 flu has been circulating throughout California and Shasta County, and now that children are back to school, we will likely see an increase in flu cases spreading from child to child. New federal, state and local guidance for schools provides a range of response options for school administrators and public health officials. Information about flu preparedness and prevention is available on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website (http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/parents/) and Shasta County Public Health website (www.shastapublichealth.net).

We all hope that the fall flu season will be mild, but it is important to be prepared. If flu begins spreading to large numbers of people, state and local health officers will need to balance the risk of flu cases in the community against the disruption that school dismissals can cause in both the educational field and in the community.

At this time, state and local public health officials have advised that students can - and should - continue to come to school, as long as they are not sick and do not have flu symptoms. Flu-like symptoms include: fever (over 100 degrees F), feverishness, cough, body aches, feeling extremely tired, and sore throat, and, less commonly, runny or stuffy nose. Additional symptoms may include vomiting or diarrhea. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as well as local health officials now recommend that **anyone with an influenza-like illness or symptoms should remain home until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications (like acetaminophen, e.g. Tylenol, or ibuprofen, e.g. Motrin), and should avoid contact with others.**

Please teach your children how to reduce their risk of getting the flu and how to protect others from becoming infected. If we all practice good hygiene, health officials believe we can limit the spread of the flu in our schools and child care centers.

- **Avoid close contact** with people who are sick.
- **Stay home when sick** and maintain distance from other people to prevent the spread of illness.
- **Wash hands often**, with soap and hot water for at least 20 seconds (that is about as long as it takes to sing the “Happy Birthday” song twice). Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are also effective in reducing the spread of the flu.

- **Cover coughs and sneezes** with tissues or by coughing into the inside of the elbow. Wash hands after blowing nose or coughing into a tissue, and dispose of tissues after use.
- **Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth** to prevent the spread of germs.

Public health officials stress that there are separate vaccinations for seasonal flu and the H1N1 flu this year. Seasonal flu vaccines are available now among some private providers and will be available through Public Health by late September. If you are in a priority groups (listed below), we encourage you and your family to get these vaccinations as soon as they are available from your health care provider or local clinic. The H1N1 vaccine is under production and may be available sometime between October and January. The H1N1 vaccine may require two shots or nasal mist doses given a few weeks apart to provide adequate protection. There may be limited supplies of H1N1 vaccine at first, and high-risk groups may be vaccinated first. **Priority groups for seasonal flu vaccine** are those over age 50, children 6 months-18 years old, pregnant women, health care workers, any age group with chronic medical conditions, and caregivers of infants. **Priority groups for Pandemic H1N1 flu vaccine** are children 6 months-18 years old, pregnant women, health care workers, any age with certain chronic medical conditions, caregivers of infants, and young adults. Older adults are not a priority group for Pandemic H1N1 flu vaccine, as most hospitalizations from pandemic flu have been in children and young adults.

Thank you for your cooperation in keeping our children and our schools healthy. If you have questions about the information or recommendations in this letter, please do not hesitate to contact <**insert name of school or district nurse and phone number**> or Shasta County Public Health at (530) 225-5591.