Shasta County Public Health Guidance for School (K-12) Teachers
Response to Influenza for the 2009-2010 School Year
September 1, 2009

Introduction

On August 7, 2009, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued *Guidance for State and Local Public Health Officials and School Administrators for School (K-12) Responses to Influenza during the 2009-2010 School Year*. This guidance was designed to decrease exposure to regular seasonal influenza and 2009 H1N1 influenza while limiting the disruption of day-to-day activities and the vital learning that goes on in schools, and provides a menu of tools that school and health officials can choose from based on conditions in their area. The complete guidance, technical report and communications toolkit can be found at http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/schools/.

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) endorses the recommendations in CDC's Guidance and on August 24, 2009, issued *CDPH Guidance for School (K-12) Responses to Influenza During the 2009-2010 School Year*, and encouraged local health departments and school systems to implement these measures. The complete guidance can be found at http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Documents/CDPH-Guidance-School-K-12-Response-Influenza-8-24-09.pdf.

Shasta County Public Health concurs with the CDC and CDPH recommended responses under conditions with similar severity as in spring 2009. SCPH will issue additional guidance or direction for school responses during time of increased influenza severity as conditions or state and federal guidance change.

To facilitate sharing of information with our community partners a **H1N1 Pandemic Flu Message Line** has been established at **(530) 225-3762** so school officials can speak directly to a Public Health staff or if they are unavailable leave a message which will be answered ASAP. School officials can also contact us via a special email account: DOC45@co.shasta.ca.us. Further information, for you and the public, is available at our Shasta County Public Health website at www.shastapublichealth.net.

Highlights

Take the following steps ALL the time and not only during a flu pandemic to help keep your students and yourself from getting sick with flu.

- **Educate and encourage students to cover their mouth and nose with a tissue** when they cough or sneeze. Also, provide them with easy access to tissues. Remind them to cover coughs or sneezes using their elbow instead of their hand when a tissue is not available.
- **Remind students to practice good hand hygiene** and provide the time and supplies (easy access to running water and soap or alcohol-based hand cleaners) for them to wash their hands as often as necessary.
- **Be a good role model** by practicing good hand hygiene and covering your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.

- **Develop and implement an education campaign** at the beginning of the school year to encourage hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette

- **Keep an eye out for sick students and send them to the school health office for further evaluation.** Sick people should stay at home until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever or signs of a fever, such as a temperature > 100 degrees F (without the use of fever-reducing medicine).

- **Clean surfaces and items** that are more likely to have frequent hand contact such as desks, door knobs, keyboards or pens, with cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas.

- **Teachers should also stay home when sick.** Stay home until at least 24 hours after you no longer have a fever or signs of a fever, such as a temperature > 100 degrees F (without the use of fever-reducing medicine).

- **If you are pregnant, have asthma, diabetes, heart disease, or other conditions that put you at higher risk for complications from the flu**, you should **speak with your doctor as soon as possible** if you develop symptoms of flu-like illness. People at high risk of flu complications who develop flu can benefit from early treatment with antiviral medicines.

- **Shasta County Public Health advises that it is very important to get separate vaccinations for seasonal flu and the Pandemic H1N1 flu this year.** High risk groups including children and young adults, caregivers of young children, pregnant women, healthcare workers and those persons with chronic health conditions will be vaccinated first. It is recommended that you and your family members who are in the priority target populations get vaccinations as soon as vaccine is available.

- **If you have children**, plan ahead for child care if your child gets sick.

- **Be prepared in case the flu becomes more severe**.

    - **Develop options for how school work can be continued at home** (e.g., homework packets, Web-based lessons, phone calls), if your students are home because they are ill or other reasons.
    - **Be prepared for sick students or staff to stay home for at least 24 hours after any temperature greater than 100 degrees F has gone away without the use of fever lowering medicine.**
    - **Allow students at high risk of complications of flu to stay home**. These students should make this decision in consultation with their physician or other primary care provider.
    - **Find ways to increase** the space between people in your classroom. For example, you might rearrange desks so that there is more space between students, consider cancelling classes that bring students together from different rooms, or postpone class trips.