



COUNTY OF ORANGE HEALTH CARE AGENCY

PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES

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September 25, 2009

To: All Orange County School District Superintendents and Managers

Re: Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza (also known as swine flu, novel H1N1 influenza)

As you know, the pandemic H1N1 2009 influenza virus (pH1N1) is expected to cause significant illness this influenza season, particularly among children and young adults. **Schools have an important role to play, both in prevention and in monitoring absenteeism in order to assess the timing and extent of the pandemic in Orange County.** Based on the experience with pH1N1 thus far, the virus causes an illness similar in severity to seasonal influenza and is spread in the same ways. Influenza is spread mainly person-to-person through coughing or sneezing by infected persons. The symptoms may include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have also had vomiting and/or diarrhea.

In order to help us effectively monitor this outbreak, schools need to do the following.

- Monitor absenteeism and determine the reasons for absences
- Report any unusual absenteeism or increase in febrile respiratory illness (at least 10% above baseline absenteeism) to Orange County Public Health*.
- Report any clusters of illness (at least 20% of a class or other defined group of students and/or staff, with a minimum of 5 persons ill) to Orange County Public Health*

*Reporting should be done by phone (714-834-8180) or preferably using the web-based reporting system which will be active at www.ochealthinfo.com/h1n1/school.htm starting 10/5/09.

Occurrence of a case or cases of pH1N1 illness at a school does not change the current recommendations for schools (see also the California Department of Public Health recommendations at: [CDPH K-12 school guidance](#)):

- Students and staff should stay home when sick
- Sick students and staff should be separated promptly from others
- Enforce hand hygiene (including use of alcohol-based hand sanitizer) and respiratory etiquette
- Perform routine cleaning, especially for high-touch surfaces
- Encourage ill staff and parents of high-risk students to seek early treatment

Student dismissal from school (assuming no change in severity of illness due to pH1N1)

Dismissing students from a school may be advisable if so many of the staff are out ill that the school cannot operate safely or if a cluster of influenza-like illness is occurring at a school where many or all of the students are at high risk for severe complications due to influenza. Such decisions should be made on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the potentially negative consequences of dismissing students. If you think student dismissal should be considered in a particular situation, please contact Orange County Public Health at 714-834-8180.

Additional resources for schools are available from:

Please see the attached frequently asked questions for more information related to schools and pH1N1.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/schools/>

California Department of Public Health: <http://ww2.cdph.ca.gov/>; swine flu hotline: 1-888-865-0564

California Department of Education: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/hn/h1n1flu.asp>

Orange County Health Care Agency: <http://ochealthinfo.com/h1n1> and <http://healthdisasteroc.org/flu/schools.htm>

Orange County Department of Education: <http://fluinformation.ocde.us/Page3562.aspx>

Thank you for your assistance in responding to this important health issue.