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Guidance on H1N1 for Elementary and Secondary Schools

NH Department of Health and Human Services (NH DHHS) recommends:

- Identify ill students and staff as early and quickly as possible.
- Send home any ill student or staff. They should stay at home until they have no fever for at least 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medication.
- Continue to encourage good hygiene, which is crucial to preventing the spread of respiratory illnesses.

Students and Staff

- Maintain general health and hygiene activities in your school. Instruct and remind all students and staff about careful hand washing (and/or use of alcohol hand gel) and the importance of coughing and sneezing into the elbow. In addition, remind everyone not to share drinking containers or utensils.
- Soap and paper towels (and/or hand gel) should be readily available and kept well stocked. Frequently touched surfaces (including desks and keyboards) should be regularly cleaned.
- Any student or staff presenting with influenza-like illness [fever (>100°F) and/or cough or sore throat] should be dismissed. They should be instructed to contact their health care provider initially by phone or email to report illness, particularly if they have any underlying medical conditions.
- Ill students and staff should only leave home in case of emergency or to seek medical attention (i.e., clinic visit, pharmacy pickup) and they should wear a face mask while out. If a face mask is not available, tissues or a handkerchief should be used to cover all coughs and sneezes. Ill students and staff should avoid spending time in public places (such as shopping centers or parks) or in others homes because this increases the risk of transmitting illness.
- It is recommended that students and staff who have recovered from illness can return to school 24 hours after their fever has resolved (without the use of antifever medications such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen). Most people with H1N1 infection in the spring of 2009 had a fever lasting from 2-4 days, requiring them to be out of school/work for 3-5 days.
- School nurses should report higher than normal absenteeism to NH DHHS Communicable Disease Section 603-271-4496. Early planning should include identification of a school “sick room” without much traffic where ill students and staff can be kept until they are able to leave school. It is recommended that ill students and staff wear a facemask when in contact with others, and all staff caring for these individuals should use appropriate personal protective equipment. For information on personal protective equipment, please refer to the most current H1N1 Clinical Guidelines at <http://www.dhhs.state.nh.us/DHHS/CDCS/han.htm>.

- We do not currently recommend canceling any events or closing any schools given the existing ongoing community spread of H1N1 and the negative consequences of school dismissal. This recommendation may change as we monitor progression of H1N1 in our communities this fall.
- Additional resources are available for those caring for someone who is ill at http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance_homecare.htm and for those who have developed flu-like symptoms at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/sick.htm>.

This document is consistent with the recommendations provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/schools/technicalreport.htm>.

Source: José T. Montero, MD, Director of the NH Division of Public Health Services

Please refer to the NH DHHS website at http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/DHHS/DHHS_SITE/swineflu.htm for more information.

Sincerely,

George A. Cushing

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