



August 25, 2009

MEMORANDUM

TO: Local and Intermediate School District Superintendents, Public School Academy Directors, Nonpublic School Administrators, and Public Health Officers

FROM: Mike Flanagan, Superintendent of Public Instruction
Janet Olszewski, Director, Michigan Department of Community Health

SUBJECT: Fall 2009 Updated H1N1 Guidance

Handwritten signatures of Mike Flanagan and Janet Olszewski in black ink.

Currently, the State of Michigan is preparing for a resurgence of the 2009 novel influenza A (H1N1) virus. We have been able to learn much from our experience with this virus during the first wave of this influenza pandemic in schools and local health department jurisdictions. While planning and preparations are continuing, our knowledge about this virus continues to evolve daily, and we would like to bring several issues to your attention as we prepare for the new school year and the increase in influenza activity, both seasonal and pandemic, that will occur.

The H1N1 virus has been shown to affect school-aged children disproportionately, and children are known to be highly likely to transmit flu viruses, especially in school and other congregate settings. All of us need to do what we can to keep students engaged in the learning process, and to maintain a sense of normalcy. During the fall influenza season, we also will need to be prepared and ready.

We strongly recommend that schools and school districts work closely with local health departments early in the planning process, and partner with them to report influenza activity, absenteeism, and potential school dismissals; to implement recommended interventions; and to educate students and the community. Schools and state health departments should ensure that continuity of operations plans are in place and updated to reflect the potential impact of pandemic influenza upon staff levels and/or student absenteeism. Other recommendations for schools and public health include:

- Schools and health departments should begin planning for seasonal or pandemic vaccination programs, either on or off-site, specifically targeted to protect the young and/or at-risk school-aged children and staff.
- The federal Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), working with the United States Department of Education (USED), released several documents to assist educators and public health officials in decision-making regarding a potential school dismissal due to H1N1 influenza: "Guidance for State and Local Health Officials and School Administrators for School Responses to Flu during 2009-2010 School Year," and a "Technical Report for State and Local Health Officials and School Administrators on CDC Guidance for School Responses to Flu during 2009-2010 School Year." These documents provide different guidance from those implemented this spring, and we recommend that

these be reviewed closely. These documents are available at:
<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/schools/>.

- For the first time, the federal government will be implementing a national school dismissal reporting system in order to track the impact of the novel influenza A (H1N1) virus. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is requesting, by 10:00 a.m. each day, schools or school districts report if they are dismissed due to H1N1 activity during the 2009-2010 school year. School districts and local public health agencies may complete this form via the Web (www.cdc.gov/FluSchoolDismissal), email (FluSchoolDismissal@cdc.gov), or fax (770-488-6156). Further information can be found at: [http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/schools/dismissal form/](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/schools/dismissal_form/).
- Examine existing contracts for any employee issues or stipulations if school is dismissed, or if staff are asked to stay home if they are ill.
- With regard to education requirements, make school curriculum plans adaptable and flexible; waivers from the required hours of instruction are not currently anticipated. If a school requires dismissal due to heavy influenza activity or student absenteeism, the remaining school-year calendar may be impacted.
- School and health departments, with the assistance of the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) and the Department of Community Health (MDCH), should engage in parental communications now with regard to expectations for the fall.
- Start educating students, parents, and staff now with regard to preventive hygiene practices and remaining home if ill.
- Investigate how your meal programs will be impacted if you have to dismiss a school in your district. United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has posted information as of July 29, 2009 at http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/governance/Policy-Memos/2009/SP_31-2009_os.pdf.
- Encourage seasonal and novel influenza A (H1N1) vaccination when it becomes available.

Decisions regarding the most appropriate time for school dismissal will always be difficult, as they may involve school-based factors such as staff or student absenteeism; or public health-based decisions based on high levels of school-based virus transmission or community mitigation needs. As such, these decisions are local in nature and could vary from district to district, if not school to school.

DHHS also released a "Preparing for Flu: A Communication Toolkit for Schools (K-12)," also at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/schools/>. Please also visit www.michigan.gov/flu and www.michigan.gov/mde for state agency and federal information, and the www.flu.gov and www.ed.gov websites for federal agency information.

We appreciate all that you have done with regard to the response to the first wave of this novel influenza strain. We look forward to working with you this fall.

cc: William Mayes, MASA
David Martell, MSBO
Dan Quisenberry, MAPSA
Billie Wimmer, MCCA