

September 11, 2009

District Takes Steps to Reduce Spread of H1N1 (Swine) Flu

In the spring of 2009, a new flu strain (known as pandemic influenza A/H1N1, or swine flu) appeared and quickly spread throughout the United States. With the cooperation of our parents and staff, we have been able to minimize the overall impact of the flu virus. Many cases of the H1N1 flu have been reported throughout our region, and, so far this year, we had one confirmed case in our district. Following a short absence, the student was released to return to school.

To combat this new flu strain, we plan to continue many of the measures previously established to protect students and staff. Additionally, new guidance from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) now stipulates that individuals with the flu should stay home until they are fever-free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications (Tylenol, Motrin, etc.). In most cases, this would be three to five days.

The district is taking steps to reduce the spread of infections like the flu at all of the school buildings. These measures include installing hand sanitizer dispensers and intensifying efforts to disinfect surfaces that are frequently touched, such as student desks. In addition, children are encouraged to wash hands frequently and cover their mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing. If a child is ill at school, the school nurse will contact a parent to arrange for someone to pick up the child.

We are currently awaiting information on the availability and use of vaccines for our staff. Recently, persons between ages five and 24 were identified as a priority group to receive the vaccine against the new flu strain. The Department of Health estimates the first doses of the new vaccine will be available in October, and details of distribution of the vaccine will be forthcoming.

Information on the flu and how you can protect your family, is available at www.health.state.pa.us, www.cdc.gov and www.flu.gov. For further information contact the school nurses, your local health department, or the Pennsylvania Department of Health at 1-877-PA-HEALTH.

With the health of our students and staff as our priority, we look forward to a productive school year.

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