



### **Information on Swine Influenza A (H1N1)**

Human cases of swine influenza A (H1N1) virus infection have been identified in the United States. Human cases of swine influenza A (H1N1) virus infection also have been identified internationally.

Federal Public Health Officials are urging everyone to take universal precautions which include:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hands cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread that way.

#### **Try to avoid close contact with sick people.**

- Influenza is thought to spread mainly person-to-person through coughing or sneezing of infected people.
- If you get sick, CDC recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

There are unique precautions that schools should take to limit exposure and keep everyone healthy. If your school has been affected by the outbreak, there are some measures that you can take to get back to normal as quickly and safely as possible. The following are some tips for school personnel.

For more information or assistance, feel free to call Safe Havens International at **877.821.PLAN (7526)**. We will continue to post additional information on our website at [www.safehavensinternational.org](http://www.safehavensinternational.org).



### **Prevention and Preparations**

- Place posters on hand washing and infection control in schools and online.
- Provide information to schools, parents, and staff about hand sanitizers, cough and sneeze etiquette, signs and symptoms of influenza.
- Ensure custodial staff has appropriate training on proper cleaning and disinfecting work and play areas.
- Ensure schools and departments have adequate supplies (soaps, hand sanitizers, and paper towels).
- Check First Aid Kits and add N95 face masks for school nurses and other staff.
- Establish and test an emergency communication protocol, including an internal communication staff tree.
- Provide information to staff and parents on pandemic planning for families.
- Develop Incident Command Center protocol, location, equipment and assign staff.
- Develop plans for operating with staff workforce reduction.
- Develop plans to secure buildings, information technology, and finance.
- Encourage employees to use Direct Deposit.
- Encourage parents to have alternative child care plans.
- Develop plans for educational continuity if schools close.
  - Study packets, suggested educational activities, and internet educational links for students and parents
  - Web-based education options:
    - On-line classes
    - Virtual school
    - Education Blogs
    - Home school educational websites
- Find out if vendors in the supply chain have a pandemic or emergency plan for continuity or recovery of supply deliveries.
- Plan for a full school closure or a partial school closure (i.e., some but not all schools are closed, or students are dismissed but staff works with local agencies to assist families).
- Develop a mental health plan for students and staff, in conjunction with local mental health services staff to implement during a pandemic event and during the recovery phase; the plan should include Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome counseling.
- Develop Human Resources employee emergency contact lists and reciprocal contact procedures; Human Resources should conduct a study of critical infrastructure staff with young children (because they are more likely to remain home during a widespread illness event) to determine if redundancy plans are necessary; develop a Fitness for Duty checklist to determine if an employee is ready to return to work and under what conditions.
- The local school superintendent should establish a command structure in the event that he or she is unable to continue work during the pandemic event or is unable to return to work during the recovery phase; develop central office teleconferencing protocols in the event that schools are closed.
- Develop plans to conduct table-top exercises to practice and refine pandemic plan.
- Apply all plans and procedures to after-school programs.



**SAMPLE LETTER: First Case in the United States**

*Use this letter to help prepare parents for pandemic flu after the first animal case is found in the United States. Even though the confirmation of an animal infected with flu (avian, swine, etc.) in the United States does not signal a pandemic, there will be confusion and concern when this happens.*

Dear Parents,

As expected, Swine Flu viruses are now in the United States. It is important to know that, at this time, there are no known human cases of Swine Flu in {INSERT STATE HERE}. Health officials are worried that the virus may change and spread throughout the United States. If that happened it could spread from person-to-person. This would cause a worldwide flu outbreak, called a pandemic. So even though there is no flu pandemic now, we want to remind you about some ways to protect your family from getting sick:

- Keep children who are sick at home. Don't send them to school.
- Teach your children to wash hands a lot with soap and water for 20 seconds. Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
- Teach your children to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or by coughing into the inside of the elbow. Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
- Teach your children to stay at least three feet away from people who are sick.
- People who are sick should stay home from work or school and avoid other people until they are better.
- Do not touch sick or dead animals

Enclosed with this letter is a checklist to help families get ready for a pandemic flu outbreak. This information can also help your family get ready for any kind of emergency.

If you have questions, please contact your school nurse or healthcare provider. You can get more information from your local health department on their website.

The federal government website with information on planning for individuals and families: <http://www.pandemicflu.gov>

The American Red Cross: <http://www.redcross.org>



**SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS: First Case in Local Areas**

*Use this letter to give parents basic information about a pandemic flu outbreak and schools remaining open.*

Dear Parents,

This letter will give you information about a flu outbreak in [Insert your county/city here]. Every year, some people get sick with the flu during the fall and winter months. This year there is a new flu virus that is making many people in [Insert your county/city here] sick. So many people are sick in [Insert your county/city here] and the United States that health officials call it a pandemic flu. A lot of students and teachers in our school are sick with the flu. We hope they will all get better quickly. At this time, the county health department tells us that students who are not ill can safely come to school. The schools will remain open. We will keep you updated with any important information. To keep the flu from spreading to more people, we ask you to keep sick children home. Any children who are sick in school will be sent home. Public health officials want you to protect yourself and your family against pandemic flu. Here are some ways to stop the spread of germs and sickness:

- Keep children who are sick at home. Don't send them to school.
- Teach your children to wash hands a lot with soap and water for 20 seconds. Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
- Teach your children to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or by coughing into the inside of the elbow. Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
- Teach your children to stay away at least three feet away from people who are sick.
- People who are sick should stay home from work or school and stay away from other people until they are better.
- Stay away from shopping malls, movie theaters or other places where there are large groups of people.

If the pandemic flu continues to spread and more students become ill, schools may close for days or weeks. The purpose of closing schools will be to keep children from getting sick. If schools are closed, children should stay at home. Begin planning now for childcare in your home. Recommendations may change during the course of a pandemic flu outbreak.

If you have questions, please contact your school nurse or healthcare provider. You can call the school hotline (INSERT NUMBER). You may also contact the local health department (INSERT NUMBER or WEBSITE).

The federal government website with information on planning for individuals and families: <http://www.pandemicflu.gov>

The American Red Cross: <http://www.redcross.org>



**SAMPLE LETER TO PARENTS: School closure**

*Use this letter to inform parents of school closing.*

Dear Parents, The \_\_\_\_\_ health officials have ordered all schools in \_\_\_\_\_ to close. This order is because of the pandemic flu situation. All schools are immediately closed until further notice and children should stay home. Schools may be closed for days or even weeks to reduce contact among children and stop the spread of the flu. We know that many students and their families are very sick. We know this is a hard time for our community and our hearts go out to those who are ill. Because the flu is easily spread from person-to-person, it is not safe for large groups of people to gather. During this time, both children and adults should stay away from other people and groups as much as possible. They should not gather in other locations such as shopping malls, movie theaters or community centers. We know that it may be hard to get a doctor's appointment, go to a clinic or even be seen in a hospital emergency room. Here are some tips for helping those who are sick with the flu:

- Have them drink a lot of liquid (juice, water).
- Keep the sick person as comfortable as possible. Rest is important.
- For fever, sore throat and muscle aches, use ibuprofen (Motrin) or acetaminophen (Tylenol). Do not use aspirin with children or teenagers; it can cause Reye's syndrome, a life-threatening illness.
- Keep tissues and a trash bag within reach of the sick person.
- Be sure everyone in your home washes their hands frequently.
- Keep the people who are sick with the flu away from the people who are not sick.

For more information, call your healthcare provider or the local health department Hot-Line (INSERT NUMBER)

We will contact you as soon as we have information about when school will reopen. Please watch news media announcements regarding schools, and check the school district's website for periodic updates.

*We encourage all parents to encourage their children to read whatever textbooks are available at home, to read other reading material at home, to practice computations and writing while at home, and, if available, access instructional programs on network, public, and/or access channels.*

## MENTAL HEALTH TIPS

It should be noted that a majority of the experts highly recommend that development of emotional resilience provides an important foundation that helps most people endure adverse circumstances and promotes recovery. As a preventive effort, during the preparedness and pre-pandemic phases, school mental health officials should utilize the time to build resilience for all students with a targeted focus on those that would be at greatest risk in a pandemic due to their work responsibilities or other characteristics. Drawing from the literature and evidence base related to risk and protective factors in mental health, it is clear that certain skills and belief patterns are associated with better long-term emotional function and recovery. The American Psychological Association has initiated efforts to improve mental health indicators by addressing emotional resilience and has established a resilience project in recent years. Their general recommendations for building personal resilience are summarized in the following steps<sup>1</sup>:

1. *Make connections with close family members, friends, civic groups, faith-based organizations, or other local groups.*
2. *Try to look beyond the present to how future circumstances may be a little better, and note any subtle ways in which one might already feel somewhat better in dealing with difficult situations.*
3. *Accept circumstances that cannot be changed and focus on circumstances that one can alter.*
4. *Develop realistic goals and regularly take action that moves one toward goals.*
5. *Act on adverse situations by taking decisive action, rather than detaching from problems and stresses while wishing they will go away.*
6. *Look for opportunities to learn something about oneself, and to find self-growth in some respect as a result of one's struggle with loss.*
7. *Develop confidence in one's ability to solve problems and trust one's instincts.*
8. *Consider the stressful situation in a broader context and keeping a longer term perspective.*
9. *Maintain an optimistic outlook and try to visualize what one wants, rather than worry about what one's fears.*
10. *Pay attention to one's own needs and feelings, engaging in enjoyable relaxing activities and exercising regularly.*
11. *Utilize preferred ways of coping, such as writing about thoughts and feelings, meditation and spiritual practices, and utilizing sources of personal strength which have been successful in past experiences.*
12. *Maintain flexibility and balance in life by:*
  - a. *Allowing oneself to experience strong emotions, while also realizing at times it is necessary to avoid experiencing them in order to continue functioning*
  - b. *Stepping forward to take action to meet the demands of daily living and also stepping back to rest and re-energize*
  - c. *Spending time with loved ones to gain support and encouragement and also to nurture oneself*

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<sup>1</sup> From the American Psychological Association on Building Resilience at [www.apa.org](http://www.apa.org)



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*d. Relying on others, while also relying on oneself*

Incorporating personal resilience into pandemic preparedness and response may best be carried out by identifying at-risk groups and individuals to promote development of their own plans as part of preparedness efforts. Personal resilience plans should be designed to:

- Monitor and limit unnecessary exposure
- Monitor general and personal risk factors
- Develop coping styles
- Increase social connectivity
- Enhance self-awareness of stressors and the need to seek assistance
- Re-establish work and life balance
- Advocate for change based on lessons learned