

## **Answers to Frequently Asked Questions for Administrators of Schools and Child Care Programs**

**From the New Hampshire Department of Education (NHDOE) and the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (NHDHHS)**

We are providing answers to frequently asked questions for school and child care personnel about the current H1N1 influenza (Swine Flu). We have dedicated a phone line specifically to answer questions from school and child care personnel. This line will be available from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM Call: 223-3731.

**There is a separate public inquiry line that is available to parents and other members of the public: 1-888-330-6764.**

### **How do we determine it is necessary to close a school or child care program?**

School and child care closure decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis in consultation with state and local public health and education officials. In considering whether to recommend closure, public health officials will consider whether there is a confirmed or probable case; the severity of the virus; whether the patient was infectious when at the school or child care facility; and whether closure will decrease the spread of illness in the community. Frequent communication will take place with affected schools.

### **How long will a school or child care program closure last?**

Decisions to re-open schools will be made on a case-by-case basis in consultation with state and local public health and education officials. Frequent communication will take place with affected schools.

### **What are the H1N1 influenza infection prevention recommendations for schools and child care programs?**

At this time, NHDHHS recommends following the CDC's [Preventing the Flu: Good Health Habits Can Help Stop Germs.](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/habits.htm)( <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/habits.htm>) This website contains links to printable materials including posters for use in your school.

### **What are the symptoms of H1N1 influenza?**

It is a respiratory disease. Symptoms of influenza include fever, cough, sore throat, muscle aches, fatigue and sometimes vomiting and diarrhea.

### **What should a school or childcare program do if a child shows possible symptoms of influenza during the school day?**

Take these immediate actions:

- Contact parent or guardian
- Isolate the child from other children, under supervision of an adult
- Have the child wear a surgical mask if tolerated
- Limit the number of people who come into contact with the child
- Adults in contact should use a surgical mask and continue to wash hands frequently

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- Dismiss the child from school or child care for 7 days or until 24 hours after symptoms are gone
- Guide parents with questions to the public inquiry line at **1-888-330-6764**.

**How will we know if a child in our school/child care is diagnosed with H1N1 influenza?**

- NHDHHS is tracking all cases and will notify the appropriate school or child care programs if a probable or confirmed case is diagnosed.

**If a child or other household member is diagnosed with H1N1 influenza, should other children who have had close contact be allowed to return to school or childcare?**

This will be handled on case-by-case basis in consultation with NHDHHS.

See also CDC's [Interim Guidance for Swine influenza A \(H1N1\): Taking Care of a Sick Person in Your Home](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance_homecare.htm). ([http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance\\_homecare.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance_homecare.htm))

**Should schools be interviewing faculty and students to determine whether they traveled to affected areas?**

The probable cases we have seen in New Hampshire demonstrate that travel is not a determining indicator of the H1N1 virus.

It is more critical to look for flu-like symptoms in students and staff, and to instruct those with symptoms to not come to school or work, and to consult with their health care providers.

**Should we exclude children from school/child care programs who are returning from affected areas, or had contact with people who traveled to affected areas?**

The probable cases we have seen in New Hampshire demonstrate that travel is not a determining indicator of the H1N1 virus. It is more critical to look for flu-like symptoms in students and staff, and to instruct those with symptoms to not come to school or work, and to consult with their health care providers.

**Are schools and childcare programs required to report to parents if there is a potential or diagnosed case of H1N1 influenza?**

If a case is confirmed, NHDHHS will provide recommended actions.

**Are there any special cleaning procedures for facilities at which there have been no confirmed cases?**

- School custodians should follow routine cleaning and disinfection procedures for all buildings.

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- No special cleaning or disinfection products are recommended. Custodial staff should use appropriate personal protective equipment including gloves when using chemical cleaners or disinfectants.
- Childcare providers are required to follow NH Child Care Program Licensing cleaning and sanitation rules.

#### **Are there any special cleaning procedures for facilities re-opening after closure for confirmed cases?**

- When schools re-open, CDC recommends that commonly touched surfaces such as stairway railings, elevator buttons and door handles be cleaned by wiping them down with detergent-based cleaners or EPA registered disinfectants.
- Such products should be used according to product labels.
- Additional extensive cleaning of schools by wiping down floors and walls is not necessary.

#### **What should schools and/or child care programs be thinking about if there are closures?**

- If schools or child care programs close and there is a need for child care, families could plan to work together with two to three other families to supervise and provide care (using the same caregivers each day) for a small and consistent group of infants and young children while their parents are at work (studies suggest that child care groups with fewer than five children typically have fewer respiratory infections).
- Schools and child care facilities in unaffected areas should begin to prepare for the possibility of school dismissal or child care facility closure. This includes asking teachers, parents and officials in charge of critical school-associated programs (such as meal services) to make contingency plans.
- If a school or child care program closes, school or childcare related gatherings, such as sports activities and field trips, should be cancelled until school reopens.

#### **What should residential schools do if they have a student with influenza symptoms?**

- Students should be voluntarily isolated either at home, in the infirmary, or another setting separate from non-affected students.
- Residential schools and programs and residential group homes should contact the school public inquiry line for NHDHHS for consultation on specific students.

*These recommendations are subject to change as additional epidemiological and clinical data become available.*