

# NESD Head Start H1N1 Pandemic Action Plan

## Preparedness Phase

- Review your pandemic influenza plan.
- Determine staff roles and responsibilities in the event of school closure due to pandemic flu outbreak.
- Coordinate efforts with local health officials and emergency preparedness officials.
- Educate students and staff about the importance of common-sense hygiene:
- Cover nose and mouth with tissue when coughing or sneezing (or cough/sneeze into sleeve)
- Wash hands frequently with soap and water
- Use hand sanitizer if soap and water is not available
- Provide time and facilities for students to wash hands as necessary throughout the school day.
- Be vigilant about routinely cleaning commonly touched surfaces (eg. doorknobs, keyboards).
- Develop a policy regarding exclusion for flu-like symptoms; follow guidelines from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- Share prevention messages and exclusion policy with parents at beginning of school year.
- Consider your communication vehicles: written letters, e-mails, electronic alert systems and/or the school's Web site.
- Ensure that standard disease recognition procedures are in place. Offer staff training if necessary.
- Begin submitting weekly absenteeism data to the Health Coordinator and she will submit it to the Department of Health at [www.doh.sd.gov](http://www.doh.sd.gov).

## Flu Outbreak Phase

- Follow current guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention regarding exclusion and school dismissal. NOTE: CDC guidelines are subject to change, depending on the timing and severity of a flu outbreak. **CDC guidelines** (as of Aug. 7, 2009)
- Current CDC guidelines advise that **students or staff who exhibit flu-like symptoms** (fever with a cough or sore throat) **should stay home for at least 24 hours after they are free of fever without the use of fever-reducing medication.**
- In general, **CDC does not recommend school dismissal unless there is a magnitude of student or staff absenteeism** that interferes with the school's ability to function.
- Stay informed by visiting the CDC's Web site at: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/schools> (specific for schools) <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/> (general H1N1 information)
- Once flu hits your district, communicate with parents and the public regarding the situation. Be honest and focus on the facts as well as prevention messages. Remember to protect the privacy of any affected students and staff and their families.
- Communicate with the South Dakota Department of Education, which will serve as liaison between local districts and the Department of Health. Key staff people: Kari Senger and Mary Stadick Smith, (605) 773-3134.
- Consider exclusion options and/or alternate education plans for high-risk students (eg., students with asthma, diabetes, other chronic illnesses)
- Continue submitting weekly absenteeism data to the Department of Health.

## **Outbreak Worsens**

- Follow current guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention regarding exclusion and school dismissal. NOTE: CDC guidelines are subject to change, depending on the timing and severity of a flu outbreak.
- Rearrange classroom seating to minimize exposure to airborne germs (eg. avoid seating students face to face when possible – more space at lunch / snack time)
- Limit extracurricular activities, field trips, etc.
- Communicate with parents and the public regarding the situation.
- If an outbreak reaches a critical mass and absenteeism interferes with everyday schooling, consider school closure strategies.
- Teachers and Home Visitors will report staff and child absenteeism to the Education and Health Coordinator.
- The Health Coordinator will update the Managers and the Director.
- The Director with input from the managers / coordinators, local health care providers, the Health Advisory Committee will make the decision to close a site. The program will follow state and CDC recommendations regarding closure.
- If school closure occurs, the Health Coordinator will report it to the state Health Department.
- If school closure occurs, alert parents and the public in a timely manner and be sure to cancel extracurricular activities as well.
- If closure will be for an extended period of time, make plans to adjust the school calendar to make up these days.
- Continue submitting weekly absenteeism data to the Department of Health.

## **After an Outbreak**

- Continue to communicate with parents and the public regarding the situation.
- Continue to monitor the situation.
- Continue to submit weekly absenteeism data to the Department of Health.
- If school closure did occur, consider process for reopening, including possible screening for symptoms on return to school.

NOTE: The South Dakota Department of Education stands ready to provide districts with the most up-to-date information available, in order to help districts make informed decisions. Contact Kari Senger or Mary Stadick Smith at the South Dakota Department of Education (605) 773-3134 with questions.

September, 2009

Dear Parent / Guardian:

With the approach of winter, we also face the approach of another flu season. Last spring, a new influenza A virus, called **H1N1**, was discovered. While we don't know what this upcoming flu season will bring, we do want to be prepared as best we can. To that end, we are asking families to follow these simple strategies for helping to prevent the spread of H1N1 and other flu viruses.

- If your child has flu-like symptoms – fever of 100° or more with a cough or sore throat – **keep him or her home for at least 24 hours after the child is free of fever without the use of fever-reducing medicine.** Please note: This recommendation from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; **could change based on the severity of a potential flu wave.**
- Look for opportunities to **get your child immunized** for H1N1 flu, in addition to seasonal flu.
- Help your child stay healthy by making sure he gets enough sleep, eats well and stays hydrated.
- Teach your child to **wash her hands often.** Washing with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds is ideal (that's about as long as it takes to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice).
- Teach your children the proper use of hand sanitizer. Gels, rubs and hand wipes all work well, as long as they contain at least 60 percent alcohol. **Hand washing is preferable**, but sanitizer will work in the absence of soap and water.
- Teach your children to keep their hands away from their face and avoid touching their mouth, nose or eyes.
- Teach your children to **cover coughs and sneezes with tissues** or by coughing into the inside of their elbow. Cough or sneeze into your sleeve—not your hands.
- **Have a backup plan for child care** should your child contract H1N1 and he or she has to stay home from school.
- To get updated information regarding the H1N1 flu, we would recommend the following Web sites:  
South Dakota Department of Health: [www.doh.sd.gov/H1N1.aspx](http://www.doh.sd.gov/H1N1.aspx)  
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/)

Thank you for your cooperation in keeping our children and schools healthy!

Sincerely,  
Northeast South Dakota Head Start Program