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Special Points of Interest:

- 2009-10 Annual Identification of Students Without Health Insurance
- Surgical Mask Distribution to School Districts
- Talking with Children About H1N1 Influenza
- H1N1 Sample Letter to Parents



2009-10 Annual Identification of Students Without Health Insurance

This notice serves as a reminder to school districts of the need to identify students without health insurance. In May 2008, the Connecticut State Department of Education requested that school districts establish a systematic approach to identify students who lack health insurance and develop a system to consistently provide families of students identified as lacking health insurance with HUSKY information. This ongoing effort fulfills Section 10-206c of the Connecticut General Statutes' requirement that local school districts identify children who lack health insurance and provide information to their parents about the HUSKY plan.

The May 2008 memo to superintendents and school nurse supervisors, which provides guidance to school districts regarding this legislative mandate, is attached for your reference. Also attached is a sample HUSKY form for parents or guardians.

Questions about the HUSKY plan, enrollment or applications, should be directed to the HUSKY information hotline at 1-877-CT-HUSKY or visit their Web site at www.huskyhealth.com.

If you have any questions about annual identification of students without health insurance, please contact Stephanie Knutson, School Health Consultant at 860-807-2108 or stephanie.knutson@ct.gov.



H1N1 School Dismissal Monitoring System

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U. S. Department of Education have established a School Dismissal Monitoring System to report on H1N1 influenza related school or school district dismissal in the United States. Your assistance in reporting **known school dismissals** is very important. Please report novel influenza A (H1N1) related school and/or district closures by: 1) Filling out an [online reporting form](#); or 2) Downloading an [electronic version of the reporting form](#), filling it out, and submitting via e-mail or fax.

For more school-related influenza information, please go to www.ed.gov or www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu.



Surgical Mask Distribution to School Districts

The Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) has identified school nurses and school nurse practitioners as a priority group in the H1N1 Influenza pandemic and will be distributing one case of 500 surgical masks to each school district via FedEx or overnight mail on **Wednesday, October 28, 2009**. The surgical masks are **only** to be used for:

- placement on children who come to school with or develop flu-like symptoms during the school day. The children should be placed in a monitored area, away from main congregate areas, that has limited access until taken home. Masks should not be issued to persons picking up ill children; and
- staff who are assigned to the “clinic” or equivalent area and are responsible for monitoring ill children. It is also advisable that the number of personnel that perform these activities be restricted in number.

Masks are not recommended as a general prevention measure for healthy children and staff. The mask allocation can **only** be used as defined above and is intended to get you started as you explore resupply options in your districts. We recognize that school districts vary in size and therefore we are requesting that school nurse supervisors consider sharing the supply of surgical masks with neighboring community schools when necessary.

The DPH is also working on providing N95 masks (Kimberly Clark brand) to school nurses and school nurse practitioners. In preparation, school districts should be working with their medical advisors to develop a protocol on when to utilize N95 masks. To this end, DPH is recommending that schools have in place written air borne protection policies using current Federal OSHA Safety Standards found in 29 CFR 1910.134 at <http://www.osha.gov>.

The DPH is also asking each Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS) region to identify 25 nurses who will be trained to conduct the fit testing in the coming week; and who will in turn provide fit testing to school nurses in their DEMHS region when the masks become available.

The regional map to assist you in determining your region is available at <http://www.ct.gov/demhs/site/default.asp> (Click on “Emergency management”; then click on “Regional Offices”). If you are interested in becoming a trainer or are already a trainer, please submit your name, contact information and region to Stephanie Knutson by **Friday, October 30, 2009**.



**H1N1 Influenza
Hotline**

1-800-830-9426



Recommended School Responses for the 2009-10 School Year

- 1. Stay home when sick:** Those with flu-like illness should stay home for at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever, or signs of a fever, without the use of fever-reducing medicines.
- 2. Separate ill students and staff:** Students and staff who appear to have flu-like illness should be sent to a room separate from others until they can be sent home. CDC recommends that they wear a surgical mask, if possible, and that those who care for ill students and staff wear protective gear such as a mask.
- 3. Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette:** Wash hands frequently with soap and water when possible, and cover noses and mouths with a tissue when coughing or sneezing (or a shirt sleeve or elbow if no tissue is available).
- 4. Routine cleaning:** School staff should routinely clean areas that students and staff touch often with the cleaners they typically use. Special cleaning with bleach and other non-detergent-based cleaners is not necessary.
- 5. Early treatment of high-risk students and staff:** People at high risk for influenza complications who become ill with influenza-like illness should speak with their health care provider as soon as possible.
- 6. Consideration of selective school dismissal:** Although there are not many schools where all or most students are at high risk a community might decide to dismiss such a school to better protect these high-risk students.

Additional information may be accessed at the DPH Web site at: <http://www.ct.gov/ctfluwatch/cwp/view.asp?a=2533&q=314858#schools>.

Talking with Children about H1N1 Influenza

Concern over H1N1 Influenza can make children anxious. Helping children cope with anxiety regarding the flu requires providing prevention information without causing alarm. Children look to adults for guidance on how to react to stressful events. However, children also need factual, age appropriate information about the potential seriousness of disease risk and concrete instruction about how to avoid infection and spread of the virus. Teaching children positive preventive measures, talking with them about their fears, and giving them a sense of some control over their risk of infection can help reduce anxiety.

Tips/Guidelines

- **Remain calm and reassuring.** Children will react to and follow your verbal and nonverbal reactions. Remind them that you and the adults at their school are there to keep them safe and healthy.
- **Make yourself available.** Children may need extra attention from you and may want to talk about their concerns and questions. Provide time for children to talk about their feelings and help put their concerns into the appropriate perspective.
- **Know the symptoms of H1N1 Flu and how it spreads.** Symptoms of H1N1 influenza include fever, sore throat, and cough. Some people also have a runny nose, fatigue, body aches, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. The virus is transmitted through the coughing or sneezing of people infected with the virus. People may also become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouths or noses.
- **Review basic hygiene practices.** Encourage children to practice every day good hygiene by: washing their hands often with soap and water, especially after they cough or sneeze; not sharing food or drinks; covering their nose and mouth with a tissue or the crook of their elbow when they cough or sneeze; trying not to touch their eyes, nose, or mouth, germs often spread this way; and staying away from people who are sick.
- **Be honest and accurate.** In the absence of factual information, children often imagine situations far worse than reality. Don't ignore their concerns. Children can be told that there are many ways to avoid the virus and that doctors can help to treat people who do get sick.

You may access the full document at the following link: http://www.nasponline.org/resources/Talking_With_Children_About_Flu_FINAL.pdf.

Federal Resource:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/talkingtokids.htm>.

State Resource:

Connecticut Department of Public Health: <http://www.ct.gov/ctfluwatch/cwp/view.asp?a=2533&q=315238>.



H1N1 Sample Letter to Parents

Communication to parents and guardians is of vital importance during H1N1 Influenza outbreaks and occurrences in schools.

Two H1N1 template letters from the Centers for Disease Control is listed below and may be accessed at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/schools/toolkit/>:

- Steps the School is Taking During Current Flu Conditions; and
- Steps the School is Taking During More Severe Flu Conditions.

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