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## Influenza Preparedness for Schools

### Key Messages for Schools

The key messages that should be communicated with your staff, students, and families are preventive measures to reduce the spread of germs throughout the school year. Influenza viruses are spread by droplets produced when people cough or sneeze. Touching contaminated surfaces can also spread viruses.

#### Preventive Measures

- **Practice good hand hygiene:** Students and staff should be encouraged to wash their hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. If soap and water are not available, alcohol-based hand cleaners (containing at least 60% alcohol) are also effective at killing flu germs. Please visit [www.cdc.gov/features/handhygiene](http://www.cdc.gov/features/handhygiene) for more information.
- **Practice good respiratory etiquette:** Cover the nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, and throw the tissue in the trash after use. Wash hands promptly after coughing or sneezing. If a tissue isn't available, cough or sneeze into one's arm or sleeve. Please visit [www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/covercough.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/covercough.htm) for more information.
- **Maintain routine cleaning:** Schools should regularly clean all areas and items that are likely to have frequent hand contact (i.e. keyboards, desks, etc.) and also clean these areas immediately when visibly soiled. Use the cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas. Additional disinfection of environmental surfaces beyond routine cleaning isn't required.
- **Encourage staff and families to inquire about getting the flu shot:** To find out where to get seasonal flu vaccine, they can contact their health care provider or call the Orange County Health Referral line at (800) 564-8448.
- **Inform high-risk students and staff of recommendations for early treatment:** People at high-risk for flu complications who become ill with flu-like illness should speak with their health care provider as soon as possible. People at high risk include those who are pregnant, have asthma or diabetes, have compromised immune systems, or have neuromuscular diseases.

#### When Flu Occurs

- **Students and staff should stay home when sick!** Those with flu-like illness should stay home for at least 24 hours after they are free of fever (100° or higher), or signs of a fever, without the use of fever-reducing medications. They should stay home even if they are using antiviral drugs. Please visit [www.cdc.gov/h1n1/flu/guidance/exclusion.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1/flu/guidance/exclusion.htm) for more information.
- **Separate ill students and staff:** Those who appear to have flu-like illness should be promptly separated from others until they can be sent home (keeping a distance of 6 feet away from others).

#### School Dismissal

- **Schools may be dismissed** if a significant number and proportion of students have documented fever while at school, or if the flu starts to cause severe disease in a large proportion of those affected. County Health Officials will work with schools to determine if school dismissal will be necessary. If your school is dismissed, please visit [www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/schools/dismissal\\_form/dismissal\\_form.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/schools/dismissal_form/dismissal_form.htm) for reporting guidelines.
- **Selective school dismissals** may be considered based on the population of an individual school. A school where all or most students are at high risk (i.e. medically fragile children or pregnant students) may be dismissed in order to better protect these high-risk students.
- **Continuing school work:** schools need to develop options for how school work can be continued at home (e.g., homework packets, Web-based lessons, phone calls) if school is dismissed.

*For more information, please visit the Orange County Department of Education's H1N1/Flu website at [http://www.ocde.k12.ca.us/flu\\_update.asp](http://www.ocde.k12.ca.us/flu_update.asp).*