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# Update on School (K – 12) and Child Care Programs: Interim CDC Guidance in Response to Human Infections with the Novel Influenza A (H1N1) Virus

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## **Background**



This document provides updated interim guidance for schools and child care programs regarding the prevention of the spread of novel influenza A (H1N1) virus.

Initial cases of novel influenza A (H1N1) in the United States included school-aged students and were associated with travel to Mexico and school-based outbreaks. Early information from Mexico indicated that many previously healthy young adults were hospitalized with rapidly progressive pneumonia, frequently resulting in respiratory failure requiring mechanical ventilation and death.

Based on this initial information, CDC recommended consideration of school and child care program closure as an option to lessen the risk of infection with this novel influenza virus in order to protect students, staff, parents and other caregivers from a potentially severe disease as well as limit spread into the community.

New information on disease severity and the extent of community spread warrant revision of the school and child care program closure guidance. As of May 4, 2009, more than 1000 confirmed or probable cases of novel influenza A (H1N1) have been reported from 44 states, with numerous disease clusters, indicating spread within communities that makes individual school and child care program closure less effective as a control measure. Most U.S. cases have not been severe and are comparable in severity to seasonal influenza. CDC and local and state health officials will continue to closely monitor the severity and spread of this novel H1N1 influenza outbreak.

At this time, CDC recommends the primary means to reduce spread of influenza in schools and child care programs focus on early identification of ill students and staff, staying home when ill, and good cough and hand hygiene etiquette. Decisions about school and child care program closure should be at the discretion of local authorities based on local considerations, including public concern and the impact of school or child care program absenteeism and staffing shortages.

## **Recommendations**

- School and child care program closure is not advised for a suspected or confirmed case of novel influenza A (H1N1) and, in general, is not advised unless there is a magnitude of faculty or student absenteeism that interferes with the school or child care program's ability to function.
- Schools and child care programs that were closed based on previous interim CDC guidance related to this outbreak may reopen.
- Students, faculty or staff with influenza-like illness (fever with a cough or sore throat) should stay home and not attend school or child care programs, or go into the community except to seek medical care for at least 7 days even if symptoms resolve sooner.
- Students, faculty and staff who are still sick 7 days after they become ill should continue to stay home from school and child care programs until at least 24 hours after symptoms have resolved.
- Students, faculty and staff who appear to have an influenza-like illness at arrival or become ill during the day should be isolated promptly in a room separate from other students and sent home.
- Parents and guardians should monitor their school-aged children, and faculty and staff should self-monitor every morning for symptoms of influenza-like illness.
- Ill students should not attend alternative child care or congregate in settings other than school.
- School and child care program administrators should communicate regularly with local public health officials to obtain guidance about reporting of influenza-like illnesses in the school or child care program.
- Schools and child care programs can help serve as a focus for educational activities aimed at promoting ways to reduce the spread of influenza, including hand hygiene and cough etiquette.
- Students, faculty and staff should stringently follow sanitary measures to reduce the spread of influenza, including covering their nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing (or coughing or sneezing into their sleeve if a tissue isn't available), frequently washing hands with soap and water, or using hand sanitizer if hand washing with soap and water is not possible.