



Mark Parkinson, Governor
Roderick L. Bremby, Secretary

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
AND ENVIRONMENT

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Division of Health

**H1N1 AND SEASONAL INFLUENZA
GUIDANCE FOR GROUP RESIDENTIAL PROGRAMS
FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH**
September 22, 2009

This document provides guidance to assist group residential programs for children and youth in reducing the spread of H1N1 and seasonal influenza (flu) among program staff and the children they serve. These recommendations are based on the assumption that the severity of illness will remain similar to what was seen during the spring and summer of 2009. However, flu is unpredictable and additional steps may be necessary should flu conditions become more severe. Since conditions may vary across the state, programs are encouraged to maintain regular communication with their local health department to obtain information and guidance specific to their area.

Recommendations for all Individuals

Symptoms of H1N1 flu are similar to the symptoms of seasonal flu and include fever greater than 100 degrees, body aches, coughing, sore throat, respiratory congestion and in some cases, diarrhea and vomiting. Individuals with flu-like illness should stay home, rest and drink plenty of fluids so that they can recover without spreading the illness to others. Sick children should not attend school, child care or another group setting. All sick individuals should stay home until they have been fever free, without the use of fever-reducing medications for at least 24 hours.

As with any flu virus, individuals are encouraged to take the following steps to reduce the spread of disease:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water. Use an alcohol based hand sanitizer when soap and running water are not available. Remember to wash your hands **before** preparing or serving food, inserting or removing contact lens or treating wounds and cuts. Wash hands **after** coughing or sneezing, using the bathroom, caring for a sick person or after contact with a potentially sick person.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing and sneezing. Cough into your sleeve if a tissue is not available. Throw used tissues in the trash.
- Stay healthy by eating a balanced diet, drinking plenty of water and getting adequate rest.
- Get vaccinated against the flu. The annual seasonal flu vaccine is available now and all individuals, especially those at increased risk of complications from flu, should get their vaccination as soon as possible. A vaccine to protect against the 2009 H1N1 influenza (flu) virus is in production and will be available beginning in October. Initial target groups to receive this vaccine include:
 - Pregnant women
 - Household contacts and caregivers of infants younger than 6 months of age
 - All children and young adults ages 6 months through 24 years
 - Health care personnel
 - People ages 25-64 years with high-risk medical conditions

Recommendations for Group Residential Programs for Children and Youth

Group residential programs should review and update, as needed, their current crisis management plans and develop contingency plans to deal with possible disruptions in the educational and program activities of residents and to cover staff shortages due to illness. Plans should account for the number of residents and staff, the location and physical facilities, programs offered by the facility and availability of resident health services. Contingency plans should address all essential program services including food service, housekeeping and the supervision and protection of residents. Plans should be shared with program staff, residents and their parents/guardians or child placing agent and community partners such as local school districts and health departments

Records of residents and staff should be reviewed and updated. Be sure that current contact information and health histories, as required, are available.

Review and revise, if needed, sick leave policies to remove barriers to staff staying home when sick or to care for a sick family member. Do not require a doctor's note to confirm illness or recovery. Doctor's offices may be very busy and not able to provide such documentation.

Staff and residents should be vaccinated for seasonal flu and when available, H1N1 flu.

Emphasize the importance of basic health practices to reduce the spread of disease; washing hands frequently with soap and running water; keeping hands away from your nose, mouth and eyes; and covering your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing (Cough or sneeze into your elbow or sleeve if a tissue isn't available). The CDC website at <http://cdc.gov/h1n1flu/flyers.htm> is a good source for resource materials for this purpose.

Perform routine environmental cleaning. Clean visibly soiled areas and items immediately. Establish a schedule for the routine cleaning of frequently touched surfaces such as doorknobs, handrails, bathroom surfaces and tables. Wipe down shared surfaces such as desks, keyboards and remote controls between uses.

Increase social distances. Whenever possible there should be at least 6 feet between people. Explore ways to increase the distances between residents, for example, moving desks and beds further apart or reducing the number of residents sharing a room. Consider limiting the number of large group events residents attend.

Get plenty of fresh air. Weather permitting; residents should have daily opportunities to be outdoors. Indoors, rooms should be well ventilated. To promote fresh air circulation, open windows when possible, even for brief periods.

Notify potential visitors that no one with flu-like symptoms may enter the facility. Exclude visitors with flu-like illness.

Staff with flu-like illness should not work and should remain at home until they have been fever free, without the use of fever-reducing medications for at least 24 hours.

Isolate sick residents from those who are well. Residents with flu-like illness should be in a private room or in an infirmary or other temporary arrangement for sick residents. Designate a limited number of staff members to provide care and meals to sick residents. Assigned caregivers should limit their contact with well residents. When close contact with others cannot be avoided, the ill resident should wear a surgical mask during the period of contact. Sick

residents should remain isolated from others until they have been fever free, without the use of fever-reducing medications for at least 24 hours.

Warning! Do **not** give aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid) to children or teenagers who have flu; this can cause a rare but serious illness called Reyes Syndrome.

When possible, avoid transferring residents with flu-like illness to another group care setting until they have been fever free, without the use of fever-reducing medications for at least 24 hours.

Residents with flu-like illness should be monitored closely, especially if they have a medical condition that puts them at increased risk of severe illness from the flu. Seek medical attention if any resident develops more severe symptoms such as increased fever, shortness of breath, chest pain or pressure, rapid breathing, inability to keep down liquids because of vomiting or signs of dehydration.

Track the incidence of flu-like illness within the facility. Contact the local health department for guidance on reporting flu-like illness in your facility.

The KDHE website at <http://www.kdheks.gov/H1N1> contains additional materials and updated resources. Residential facilities are encouraged to check the website regularly.



As the state's environmental protection and public health agency, KDHE promotes responsible choices to protect the health and environment for all Kansans.

Through education, direct services and assessment of data and trends, coupled with policy development and enforcement, KDHE will improve the health and quality of life. We prevent illness, injuries, and foster a safe and sustainable environment for the people of Kansas.