

Date: 6 May 2009

To: School Nurses
Cc: School Administrators

From: Mary M. Ramos, MD, MPH
School Health Officer, NM DOH

Re: Recommendations for schools regarding H1N1 flu

Yesterday the CDC and the NM Department of Health released new guidance regarding H1N1 influenza for K-12 schools, based on new information on disease severity. Most U.S. cases have not been severe and are comparable in severity to seasonal influenza. At this time, CDC recommends the primary means to reduce spread of influenza in schools is to focus on early identification of ill students and staff, staying home when ill, and good cough and hand hygiene etiquette.

Due to the new recommendations regarding H1N1 influenza for K-12 schools, the New Mexico Department of Health (NMDOH) is advising the following:

- Students, faculty, and staff with influenza-like illness (ILI) with fever (greater or equal to 37.8°C (100°F), oral or equivalent) **AND** cough and/or sore throat should be isolated from other students until they are picked up or sent home.
- Students, faculty, and staff with ILI should be excluded from school 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 until at least 24 hours after symptoms have resolved.
- It is not necessary for students to seek medical care unless a parent/guardian feels it is warranted.
- **HOWEVER**, referral for influenza testing is encouraged for students from areas of New Mexico where there are no probable or confirmed cases to better understand where H1N1 flu is circulating.

To obtain up-to-date information on geographical surveillance information, see http://nmhealth.org/FLU/seasonal/swine_flu.html for a map of the state with cases by county.

For example, as of May 6, 2009 referral for testing is encouraged for students who appear with ILI from the northern part of the state and eastern portion of the state. If you have doubts or questions, please feel free to call 505-827-0006 and speak with the on-call epidemiologist.

Revised ILI Surveillance at Schools:

- School nurses **SHOULD NOT** submit forms for individual students with ILI.
- Schools that detect a cluster of ILI (i.e. 5 cases or more on the same day in a single school) or an unusual number of absences should consult with NMDOH by contacting the on-call epidemiologist at 505-827-0006.