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Release Date: August 7, 2009
Page 1 of 2

NEVADA STATE HEALTH DIVISION

NEWS RELEASE

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Releases Updated School Guidance

Carson City –The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention today released updated guidance for the K-12 education system in responding to infection of regular seasonal flu and the H1N1 virus. The new guidance was issued to help to decrease the spread of regular seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu among students and staff while limiting the disruption of day-to-day activities and the vital learning that goes on in schools. It is an expansion on earlier guidance and is consistent with Nevada’s efforts, which provides tools for school and health officials to tailor recommendations based upon conditions in their area.

Approximately 55 million students and 7 million staff attend the more than 130,000 public and private schools in the United States each day. This guidance is a set of strategies that schools can use to stay open while doing what they can to protect students and staff, particularly those at high-risk of complications.

“Our actions remain flexible so we can adapt as we learn more about the H1N1 virus,” said State Health Officer Dr. Tracey Green. “We are working closely with our educational partners and local health authorities and will continue to use the current school closure policy we have had in place since the Spring.”

Currently, when a school receives confirmation that there is a case of H1N1 in a student or staff member, the district’s superintendent and the local health officer meet to decide on surveillance and mitigation efforts. If a decision cannot be made or if there are additional questions, the local superintendent and the local health officer meet with the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and the State Health Officer for further guidance and decision making.

Inevitably, cases of H1N1 influenza and regular seasonal flu will continue to be confirmed in Nevada school students and staff members. When this happens, a decision must be made about facility closure. The guidance states that the disruptions caused by school closure often outweigh the benefits received as an infection-control measure. A confirmed or probable case in a student or staff member will not automatically merit a recommendation to close schools. Closing a school

(MORE)



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is a step not to be taken lightly and all implications of this action must be considered before a decision is made. This is especially true because potential benefits from the strategy of school closure to control an influenza outbreak are unproven.

CDC recently updated the recommendations for the amount of time persons with influenza-like illness should be away from others:

- **CDC recommends that people with influenza-like illness remain at home until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever (100° F [37.8°C]), or signs of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medications.**
- This is a change from the previous recommendation that ill persons stay home for 7 days after illness onset or until 24 hours after the resolution of symptoms, whichever was longer. The new recommendation applies to camps, schools, businesses, mass gatherings, and other community settings where the majority of people are not at increased risk for influenza complications. This guidance does not apply to health care settings where the exclusion period should be continued for 7 days from symptom onset or until the resolution of symptoms, whichever is longer.

Prevention measures are crucial in order to decrease your chance of becoming ill:

- Cough or sneeze into your sleeve.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you are sick with flu-like illness, CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Your fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.) Keep away from others as much as possible to keep from making others sick.

For more information, go to: <http://health.nv.gov> or www.flu.gov

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