



## Wyoming Department of Education

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### MEMORANDUM NO. 2009-079

**TO:** School District Superintendents

**FROM:** Jim McBride, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Public Instruction

**DATE:** May 8, 2009

**SUBJECT:** Information from the Wyoming Department of Health  
regarding Novel Influenza A (H1N1)

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### **IMPORTANT INFORMATION - PLEASE READ IMMEDIATELY**

Due to the recent activity surrounding the Novel Influenza A (H1N1) in several states, the Wyoming Departments of Education and Health would like to remind school districts that there is ***no need to panic***. Activities should remain in place, school doors should remain open, hand washing should be emphasized, and teachers and students who are ill should stay home. Pandemic flu plans should be in place, but do not need to be activated at this point. If you have questions regarding flu plans or need advice on creating one, please contact Meaghan McClellan. The two agencies have been working closely together to assure that there is a smooth chain of communication should cases hit Wyoming.

The state of Wyoming has tested several samples--none of which have come back positive for this strain of influenza.

Early guidance from the CDC had suggested closing schools after a single incident. **This advice has been rescinded.** Please refer to the current advice attached. Wyoming is fortunate, and at present there are no confirmed cases of Novel Influenza A (H1N1).

If cases do appear in Wyoming and there is a question about closing schools W.S. 35-1-240 (a)(iv) states:

(a) The department of health, through the state health officer, or under his direction and supervision, through the other employees of the department, shall have and exercise the following powers and duties:

(i) To exercise in Wyoming, all the rights and powers and perform all duties hereunder;

(ii) To investigate and control the causes of epidemic, endemic, communicable, occupational and other diseases and afflictions, and physical disabilities resulting therefrom, affecting the public health;

(iii) To establish, maintain and enforce isolation and quarantine, and in pursuance thereof, and for such purpose only, to exercise such physical control over property and over the persons of the people within this state as the state health officer may find necessary for the protection of the public health;

(iv) To close theaters, schools and other public places, and to forbid gatherings of people when necessary to protect the public health.

JM:mmm

Enclosure

Brent D. Sherard, M.D., M.P.H., Director and State Health Officer

Governor Dave Freudenthal

## Guidance to Schools and Child-care Facilities for Novel Influenza A H1N1 (Swine Flu) May 5, 2009

The recent discovery that a never before recognized influenza virus, referred to as Novel Influenza A H1N1 (Swine Flu), is circulating among human populations is concerning. The potential that this novel virus could result in a pandemic with large numbers of illnesses, including severe, is the basis for increased disease surveillance by public health officials and the emphasis on illness prevention strategies. Public health officials around the world, including the Wyoming Department of Health (WDH), are carefully interpreting information on the spread of this virus, as well as the populations most affected and the severity of the resulting illness.

There is still a lot we do not know about this virus. We do know it has the capability to spread rapidly from person-to-person with resulting outbreaks in some communities and settings such as schools. At this time the novel influenza virus seems to spread in ways similar to seasonal influenza viruses (the influenza viruses that cause outbreaks in WY every winter), and cause a similar spectrum of illness.

While this is somewhat reassuring, it must be kept in mind that seasonal influenza outbreaks do result in significant illness throughout the U.S., including WY, every year. It is estimated seasonal influenza is responsible for approximately 36,000 deaths in the U.S. each year, and 200,000 hospitalizations. Indeed deaths from seasonal influenza occur in WY every year (10 deaths in 2003). Severe illness from seasonal influenza can occur in any age group, but is most common in children less than 5 years of age, adults  $\geq 65$  years of age, and persons of any age with underlying chronic medical conditions. In addition, rates of infection during a seasonal influenza outbreak are highest among children. It is not uncommon for schools to experience a large absentee rate among students and staff during influenza season.

Therefore, while the Novel Influenza A H1N1 (Swine Flu) virus appears to result in illness similar to seasonal influenza, the potential number of illnesses and the severity is not trivial. Plus, there is still a lot to be learned about this novel virus. Precautions are indicated to lessen the risk of a significant individual and public health burden from this novel virus.

In addition to the usual respiratory hygiene measures that are recommended every influenza season ( [www.health.wyo.gov/phsd/epiid/swineflu.html](http://www.health.wyo.gov/phsd/epiid/swineflu.html) ) **WDH officials believe the following enhanced recommendations are indicated when Novel Influenza A H1N1 (Swine Flu) is present in a community.**

### Recommendations to Mitigate the Effects of Novel Influenza A H1N1 (Swine Flu) in Schools and Child-care Facilities

- Each morning, parents/caregivers should assess all family members and especially all children for symptoms of influenza (fever and cough or sore throat cough) or other symptoms that might be influenza.

- Each morning all school and child-care staff should assess themselves for symptoms of influenza.
- Children or staff with influenza-like illness (fever and cough or sore throat) should stay home and not attend school or child-care. All sick children and staff should stay out of school or child-care for at least 7 days after the illness began even if their symptoms resolve sooner. Children and staff who are still sick at 7 days or beyond should continue to stay home until at least 24 hours after they have completely recovered.
- If a child or adult is ill with other symptoms, they should stay home at least one day to observe how the illness develops and until completely well for 24 hours.
- Schools and child-care facilities should observe children and staff for visible signs of possible influenza illness upon arrival at school.
- Children and staff who appear ill at arrival or become ill should be promptly isolated and sent home.
- Persons who are ill should stay home and not go into the community unless they need medical care.
- Ill children should not attend alternative child care or congregate in settings other than school.
- Children 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.
- As always, situations can be individualized and school and child-care authorities may close facilities at their discretion. Parents may use their judgment regarding the risk and benefits of sending their children to school or child-care during this influenza outbreak as they would during a seasonal influenza outbreak.
- As is the practice with seasonal influenza, schools and child-care facilities may be closed if large numbers of children or staff become ill and functioning becomes disrupted.

WDH understands that the acceptable risk may vary among schools and child-care facilities. In addition the perceived risk that is acceptable to parents may vary. Therefore mitigation measures may need to be individualized based on these acceptable risks. State and local public health officials will work with school and child-care administrators to advise on possible mitigation efforts for a given situation. WDH can be contacted 24 hours a day, seven days a week at 1-888-996-9104.

We are still in the early stages of this outbreak and the situation may change. WDH will continue to monitor information both locally and nationally and continually assess whether changes are needed in these or other influenza disease control measures.