



Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services

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Margaret T. Donnelly
Director



Jeremiah W. (Jay) Nixon
Governor

August 19, 2009

Dear School Administrator:

The H1N1 influenza virus that surfaced in the spring of 2009 has continued to circulate, causing recent outbreaks at several summer camps. This virus has disproportionately affected school-age children, and it continues to pose a danger for children across our state and nation.

To date, most of those infected by the virus have suffered only mild flu symptoms. This virus, however, has the potential to cause widespread illness and to have a major impact on children, families and your schools. Therefore, it is critically important for schools to be prepared for the H1N1 flu. We urge you take the following steps:

1. Review your emergency plan; ensure that all your contact lists are up-to-date.
2. Collaborate with your state and local public health agencies. Keep up with the latest news and announcements about H1N1. Links to updated information are available at www.mo.gov.
3. Refer to and use this Web site: http://www.dhss.mo.gov/BT_Response/Schools.html. It details the most recent recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services for schools dealing with the flu.
4. Make sure that all staff and students are adequately informed about the school's safety precautions and disease-control policies.

We strongly urge you to follow the guidance offered by federal and state health officials. An outbreak of flu-like illness should be treated like any other disease outbreak. Try to maintain normal school schedules and operations if possible. County and state health officials will be ready to assist you, if necessary.

Health officials and drug manufacturers are working to have a flu vaccine ready for widespread use by October. But we cannot count on it being available in a timely fashion. When it is ready, schools may be called upon to assist with inoculation campaigns. The CDC is now implementing a nationwide system to monitor local school closings that are caused by outbreaks of the flu. The Department of Health and Senior Services will provide more information soon for Missouri school officials about this notification system.

This month, more than one million Missouri children will be returning to K-12 classrooms across our state. Thank you for your leadership as we work to keep all our children, families and school employees safe and healthy.

Sincerely,

Margaret T. Donnelly, Director
Department of Health and Senior Services

Chris L. Nicastro, Commissioner
Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

www.dhss.mo.gov

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