
"To improve the health of our communities by identifying sustainable solutions to community health issues, developing partnerships for implementation of strategies, and demonstrating our success through measurement of outcomes."

PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY

Health District 4 – Central District Health Department
April 30, 2009

SWINE FLU GUIDANCE FOR CHILD CARE FACILITIES AND SCHOOLS

Although no confirmed cases of swine influenza A (H1N1) have been identified in Idaho (as of April 29, 2009) all the attention being paid to the Swine Flu outbreak may have school officials and child care operators wondering what to do if one or more of their students becomes ill with flu-like symptoms. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides some general guidance in its pandemic flu planning materials. Central District Health Department (CDHD) is summarizing those recommendations here.

School Dismissal and Childcare Facility Closure:

- Dismissal of students should be strongly considered in schools with a confirmed case or a suspected case linked to a confirmed case.
- Decisions regarding broader school dismissal within communities with confirmed cases should be left to local authorities, including the health department.
- If the school dismisses students or a childcare facility closes, they should also cancel all school or childcare related gatherings and encourage parents and students to avoid congregating outside of the school.
- The local health department will consult with schools and childcare facilities providing guidance on length of closures (usually 7 days).
- Schools and childcare facilities in unaffected areas should begin to prepare for the possibility of school dismissal or childcare facility closure. This includes asking teachers, parents and officials in charge of critical school-associated programs (such as meal services) to make contingency plans.

In making preparations for a possible widespread swine flu event, like a pandemic, child care operators and schools should consider the following:

- Remind parents and enforce policies for having ill children stay at home during their illness.
- Remind and inform workers not to come to work while ill.
- A child may be infectious for up to 10 days after illness onset with influenza while adults are generally infectious for 5-7 days.
- Review plans for responding to a pandemic and make sure they are up to date. Resources are available on the CDHD website:
<http://cdhd.idaho.gov/PHP/pandemicinfluenza/index.htm>
- Know local/state plans for child care in the event of a mild or severe pandemic.
<http://www.panfluidaho.org/prepared.html#schools>

- Develop and implement a system to track illness and absence due to illness among children and staff if one is not already in place.
- Review and implement “CDC Guidelines and Recommendations for Preventing the Spread of the Flu in Child Care Settings: Guidance for Administrators, Care Providers, and Other Staff.”
(<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/infectioncontrol/childcaresettings.htm>)
- Make sure staff are familiar with the above guidelines and that they are being followed in your program. Remind child care staff to clean/disinfect frequently touched surfaces within the facility.
- Provide information to parents on steps that they could take to prevent flu.
(<http://www.panfluidaho.org/prepared.html#families>)
- Monitor the postings on the CDC web site about this virus to see if child care facilities should begin preparing for possible closure or changes in operation (www.cdc.gov/swineflu).
- Contact your local public health department if you have questions or suspected cases. Call the CDHD Swine Flu Hotline 321-2222 or visit us online at www.cdhd.idaho.gov
- Review your facilities emergency preparedness plans and consult with state and/or local health department’s pandemic plans, particularly if the number of cases escalates dramatically.

Child care and preschool programs can help protect the health of their staff and the children and families they serve by calling attention to the every day preventive actions that parents can initiate to protect their children.

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