

## October 2009

*This update is an effort by Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to provide guidance to schools for responding to influenza during the 2009–10 school year. It is our intent to provide you with regular updates over the course of the next few months. This updated information is based on recommendations from the Federal Centers for Disease Control and the Washington State Department of Health.*

Currently, H1N1 flu is impacting most Washington communities, with many schools, particularly in Eastern Washington, reporting significant student and staff absenteeism due to illness. To our knowledge, only one school has temporarily closed because of illness: <http://www.k12.wa.us/HealthServices/H1N1/SchoolClosures.aspx>.

New and updated information and key guidance documents can be found on the OSPI H1N1 Flu Web site: <http://www.k12.wa.us/healthservices/H1N1Flu.aspx>.

### Things to do:

- If you haven't already done so, contact your local health department regarding handling of a flu outbreak and develop a plan for interagency communication, and communication with your students and families.
- [Report a school closure in Washington](#). If you are considering closing school(s) because of the flu, consult with your county/local health department and use this online form to report a school closure in your district to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).
- As the H1N1 vaccine arrives throughout the state, your county/local health department will be a source of information including vaccination locations and priority populations.
- Encourage staff and students to stay home if they are running a fever and have flu-like symptoms.
- Separate ill students and staff from others until they can be sent home.
- More frequent cleaning using regular products: [How to Clean and Disinfect](#).
- Information for Bus Drivers: [Guidance for School Transportation](#).

### Things to discuss within your school/district:

- Planning at the District and building levels to deal with high risk students/staff during a flu outbreak.
- For students with extensive absences due to illness, districts need to re-evaluate policies they may have regarding loss of credit due to absenteeism.
- Schools should discuss how to deal with continuity of education in anticipation of extensive student/staff absenteeism.
- Consider options for students with extensive absences such as an Alternative Learning Experience (if currently a district option) or Home/Hospital, if the student qualifies. Also keep in mind that WAC 392-121-108 provides some flexibility when absences exceed 20 consecutive days.
- Teachers should take into account in their lesson planning how to deal with extended student absences—or their absence—due to illness.
- Remember that students with the flu will more than likely be unable to complete all missed assignments prior to returning to school—flexibility and patience are necessary during these times.

For additional information or questions, contact Denise Fitch, Program Supervisor, School Pandemic Flu Preparedness at [denise.fitch@k12.wa.us](mailto:denise.fitch@k12.wa.us), or 360-725-0427.