

Action Steps for Institutional Personnel to Prevent the Spread of Flu

September 8, 2009

Take the following steps to help keep students, faculty, and staff from getting sick with flu.

During current flu conditions:

- **Advise sick students, faculty, and staff to stay at home** or in their residence until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit or 38 degrees Celsius) or signs of a fever (have chills, feel very warm, have a flushed appearance, or are sweating). This should be determined without the use of fever-reducing medications (any medicine that contains ibuprofen or acetaminophen).
- **Establish a method for maintaining contact with students who are sick.** If resources permit, student affairs staff, housing staff or health care providers could be assigned to make daily contact with each student.
- **Encourage students and staff at higher risk of complications from flu to check with their health care provider** about their options. People at higher risk of flu complications who get sick will benefit from early treatment with antiviral medicines.
- **Encourage students, faculty, and staff to find out if they should get vaccinated against seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu.** Institutions should also consider offering opportunities for students, faculty, and staff to get vaccinated on campus for seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu when vaccines are available.
- **Discourage sick members of the public and sick visitors from attending institution-sponsored events** until they are free of fever for at least 24 hours.
- **Encourage students and staff to cover their mouths and noses with a tissue** when they cough or sneeze. Also, provide them with easy access to tissues and running water and soap or alcohol-based hand cleaners. Remind them to cover coughs or sneezes using their elbow or shoulder instead of their hands when a tissue is not available.
- **Establish regular schedules for frequent cleaning of surfaces and items** that are more likely to have frequent hand contact such as desks, door knobs, keyboards, or counters, with cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas. Promote frequent cleaning of bathrooms and ensure adequate supplies of soap and paper towels.

- **Provide disposable wipes** so that commonly used surfaces such as chairs, remote controls, and keyboards shared by students can be wiped down prior to each use.
- **Encourage students to frequently clean their living quarters.** Students living together should frequently clean commonly-used surfaces such as doorknobs, refrigerator handles, remote controls, and countertops.

If the flu conditions are MORE severe, the college may consider adding the following steps:

- **Allow students, faculty, and staff at higher risk for complications to stay home.** These students, faculty, and staff should make this decision in consultation with their health care provider. Try to come up with ways for work or study to continue from home.
- **Find ways to increase social distances** (the space between people) in classrooms such as moving desks farther apart, leaving empty seats between students, holding outdoor classes, and using distance learning methods.
- **Extend the time sick students, faculty, or staff stay home or in their residence** to at least 7 days, even if they feel better sooner. Those who are still sick after 7 days should continue to stay home until at least 24 hours after symptoms have gone away. Symptoms of flu include fever or chills *and* cough or sore throat. In addition, symptoms of flu can include runny nose, body aches, headache, tiredness, diarrhea, or vomiting.
- **Consider how and when to suspend classes** by working closely with your local and state public health officials. The length of time classes should be suspended depends on your goal for suspending classes and the severity and extent of illness.

Follow these steps to prepare for the flu during the 2009-2010 academic year:

- Review and revise current flu (or emergency) response plans and procedures, including plans protect to higher risk students, faculty, and staff.
- Collaborate with the local health department, community organizations, local businesses, and social services on a plan for flu response.
- Communicate with vendors who supply critical products and services, to ensure this will continue when flu conditions are more severe.
- Update student, faculty, and staff contact information as well as emergency contact lists.
- Identify and establish points of contact with the local public health and education agencies.
- Develop a plan to cover key staff positions at your institution's health clinics.
- Encourage good hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette through direct education, communication materials such as posters and flyers, and other methods including e-mail, text messaging, or phone calls.
- Develop communication materials (e.g., letters to parents, Web site postings) that can be used to inform students, faculty, staff, and parents about your institution's flu response. Check out *Preparing for the Flu: A Communication Toolkit for Institutions for Higher Education* for basic information and communication

resources such as letters and announcements. The toolkit is available at www.flu.gov/plan/school/higheredtoolkit.html.

- Consider adjusting sick leave policies so sick faculty and staff can stay home. Review policies for students to ensure that there are no negative academic consequences for staying home while sick.
- Develop a plan and options for how work can be continued at home (e.g., homework packets, Web-based lessons, phone calls), if institutions suspend classes.
- Help students, faculty, and staff understand the important roles they can play in reducing the spread of flu.

For more information:

- Visit: www.flu.gov
- Contact CDC 24 Hours/Every Day
 - 1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)
 - TTY: (888) 232-6348
 - cdcinfo@cdc.gov