

Dear Parents:

This letter is to inform you that novel H1N1 influenza, formerly known as swine influenza, is circulating in Allegheny County as well as our school. We have been working in consultation with the Allegheny County Health Department to manage this flu season with the least discomfort and disruption for our district. We realize that many people are worried and hope this letter will help address your concerns.

If you suspect your child is getting the flu, the most important thing to do is to make sure that he/she stays at home. This means that he/she does not attend school or any other public place, such as group childcare, the mall, restaurants, sporting events or any other location where other people would be exposed to influenza germs. Flu-like symptoms include:

- Fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit or over)
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Additional symptoms that may be experienced with the flu include muscle pain, fatigue and sometimes vomiting or diarrhea.

Children or staff with flu-like symptoms should remain home from school for at least 24 hours after their fever is gone. Their fever should be gone without them having taken a fever-reducing medicine such as Tylenol, Advil or Motrin. (Note: children who have symptoms of influenza should not take aspirin.) Most children recover from the novel H1N1 virus without medical attention. *A doctor's note or laboratory testing is not required to return to school.*

While most children recover without the need of medical attention, some children may have underlying health conditions that may put them at higher risk for influenza complications. If your child has an underlying health condition that puts them at higher risk for influenza complications, contact your physician immediately if your child develops flu-like symptoms. Likewise, it is important to know the warning signs that indicate more severe illness. If your child has any of these signs, you should seek urgent medical attention:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

Finally, it is important to teach your children how to reduce the risk of getting the flu and protect others from infection. Help your children learn these healthy habits by setting a good example and always doing them yourself.

- Wash your hands for 30 seconds with soap and water frequently throughout the day, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it or cough or sneeze into the crook of your arm.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.

If we all practice good hygiene in our schools, we believe we can limit the spread of the flu. We also will continue to utilize best cleaning practices for infection control in our buildings. For more information about the influenza, visit www.cdc.gov or www.flu.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.

Thank you for your cooperation in keeping our children and our schools healthy.

Sincerely,