



Placer County Health and Human Services Department

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Dear Parents of Placer County Students,

The **pandemic 2009 H1N1 flu virus** (“swine flu”) has been increasing in activity since our last letter to you, and it is likely to worsen during the fall and winter. This flu is spreading easily from person to person, and school-aged children, young adults and pregnant women are being affected more than others. Already, several schools have experienced absence levels two to three times normal, and a few classes and sports teams have had over 60% of students out ill. We are sending this letter to provide the most current information about the H1N1 flu vaccine and the importance of getting your child (and yourself) vaccinated, and to update other information about H1N1 flu symptoms, care and prevention.

The first substantial shipment of **H1N1 flu vaccine** is projected to be available during the last couple weeks of October, and subsequent shipments are expected to arrive regularly through December. Just as for seasonal flu vaccine, this vaccine will be available in various forms (e.g., injectable, nasal spray, pediatric). It is being produced by the same manufacturers using the same process, and it is approved by the FDA in the same manner – flu vaccines have a long record of safety and effectiveness. The only difference between the H1N1 and seasonal flu vaccines is the strain of influenza they contain, which is typical for flu vaccines – strains are changed in seasonal flu vaccines every year.

We have some encouraging news that suggests that people are understanding the safety and importance, especially for children, of the H1N1 flu vaccine: Results released last week from a Harvard School of Public Health survey indicate that 51% of parents are “absolutely certain” they will get the H1N1 flu vaccine for their children. This is *higher* than the percent of children that get seasonal flu vaccine each year, but we can do even better here in Placer County!

In order to vaccinate as many children as possible, your school district, along with *every* district in our county and the Placer County Office of Education, is helping us to offer **H1N1 flu vaccine clinics** at various school sites. Dates and locations are still being finalized, and will depend on vaccine availability, but information and schedules will be coming soon. And you can help – **volunteers are needed** for these clinics. Both health professionals who can administer vaccine and those without medical training will help us vaccinate as many children as possible. If you are interested in being a volunteer at H1N1 flu vaccine clinics, go to <http://www.placer.ca.gov/>, click on the “**H1N1 Information**” link and refer to the “**Volunteers Needed...**” area, or simply leave your name and contact information at **(530) 889-7167**. Also be on the lookout for volunteer opportunities from your child’s school.

Whether your child is vaccinated at one of our school-based clinics, from your health care provider, or elsewhere in the community doesn’t matter – what is important is that he or she gets the H1N1 vaccine when it becomes available (and don’t forget to get the **seasonal flu vaccine** – it is available now and both vaccines are important for all ages).

Anyone that develops **symptoms** of the flu, such as fever with cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, fatigue, diarrhea or vomiting, should stay home, rest, drink plenty of fluids, and limit contact

with others. Remember that aspirin should not be given to children or teenagers who have the flu because it can cause a rare but serious illness called Reye's syndrome. The vast majority of people won't need medical care and will recover at home without testing or antiviral treatment. Testing for the H1N1 flu is currently recommended only for hospitalized patients. Antiviral medications are recommended only in specific situations, such as for those ill individuals that are at **higher risk for complications**, including children younger than 5 years old, adults 65 years and older, pregnant women, persons with certain chronic medical conditions (such as lung or heart disease, diabetes, or kidney disease), those with immunosuppressive conditions, and persons younger than 19 years of age who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy.

If you or a family member are at higher risk for complications, you should contact your health care provider as soon as flu symptoms develop so he or she can determine whether medical care, testing or treatment is needed. Better yet, contact your health care provider now if your child is in a higher risk group to **discuss the level of risk and to develop a plan** for what you should do if flu symptoms occur. Also discuss when to get the vaccine – your provider may be able to provide vaccine earlier than the school-based clinic in your area.

Lastly, but importantly, please continue to follow our guidance on what to do to reduce the chances that your child, yourself, and others will catch the H1N1 flu virus, and to minimize its impact:

- **Anyone sick with a flu-like illness should remain home** from work, school, and community activities except to obtain medical care or other necessities and should limit contact with other people while at home. Once an individual is feeling better and has stopped all fever-reducing medicine, they should continue to monitor their temperature and remain home until they have been free of fever for at least 24 hours.
- **Cover your nose and mouth** with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and then throw it away.
- **Wash hands often** with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. Alcohol-based hand cleaners containing at least 60% alcohol are also effective.
- **Avoid touching** your eyes, nose and mouth to avoid spreading germs.
- **Avoid close contact** with people who are sick (hand holding, hugging, kissing, etc).
- **Avoid sharing items** such as food, drinks, and lip gloss with others.

Concise **guidance sheets** for H1N1 influenza in specific settings (e.g., schools, daycare, sports teams, faith community, inpatient facilities, outpatient clinics, employers), vaccine information, classroom tools and games, and many other resources on H1N1 can be found at <http://www.placer.ca.gov/> -- simply click the "**H1N1 Information**" link.

For other up-to-date **information**, visit the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services web site, www.flu.gov, the California Department of Public Health web site, www.cdph.ca.gov, or you can call the Placer County Flu Telephone Line (1-530-889-7161) or the State toll-free hotline (1-888-865-0564).

Sincerely,



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