School/Day Care Center Closure
Interim Guidance to Local Health Departments and Tribal Communities in Response to Human Infections with Novel Influenza A (H1N1)/2009 Virus

On Tuesday, May 5, 2009 the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released revised guidance related to the prevention and control of novel influenza A (H1N1)/2009 virus in schools (K-12) and childcare facilities. The Wisconsin Division of Public Health endorses this revised guidance which can be found at [http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/k12_dismissal.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/k12_dismissal.htm). The previous guidance had recommended temporary closure of schools and childcare facilities attended by children with the first cases of novel influenza A (H1N1)/2009 virus. At the onset of this outbreak of a previously unknown influenza virus, we believed it prudent to close affected schools while we learned more about the characteristics of this new disease and the strategy for community measures to prevent illness. We appreciate the collaboration of parents, students, childcare facility operators and school officials during this early stage of the outbreak. We firmly believe the closures have helped to decrease spread of infection in the schools and childcare facilities and have provided valuable time for us to gather information about this new H1N1 influenza strain in our state.

Based on information gathered pertaining to disease transmission and severity, the approach for responding to the new novel influenza A (H1N1)/2009 virus has been modified. Rather than continuing to close individual schools and childcare facilities based on the diagnosis of cases of novel influenza A (H1N1)/2009 virus in students or staff, we will instead implement a policy that focuses on keeping all students and staff with symptoms of influenza out of school and childcare facilities during their period of illness and recuperation, when they are potentially infectious to others. Students or staff who are identified as having an influenza-like illness while present in a school or childcare facility should be promptly isolated in a room separate from other students or attendees, and should be sent home as soon as possible. Ill students that are segregated while in school should be under adult supervision. Ill students should not use school or public mass transit for the trip home. Students and staff with influenza-like illness should stay home and not go into the community unless they need medical care. Those ill should not attend extracurricular activities, community activities or childcare. Asymptomatic contacts of ill patients, including contacts of patients with probable or confirmed novel influenza A (H1N1)/2009, are not restricted in their activities in the community. However, they should assess their own health frequently, and if they become ill they should immediately be subject to the same restrictions as currently indicated for ill persons.

Local Health Departments should work with schools and childcare facilities, particularly those that have one or more attendees with confirmed or probable cases of influenza, to monitor daily absences. Schools and childcare facilities in this situation should monitor daily absences and check for children with symptoms of influenza-like illness.

Decisions about school closure should be made at the discretion of local authorities based on local considerations, including public concern and the impact of school absenteeism, staffing shortages, as well as findings of rapid spread inside a school population. DPH staff are available to provide guidance about potential school closure should a school encounter an increased number of absences due to influenza-like illness. Regarding the reopening of schools, local health department staff should work closely with school officials to develop a mutually agreed-upon plan for a smooth transition for the reopening.

Revised: May 6, 2009; 2:00 p.m.