



STERLING PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Where kids achieve!

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WWW.STERLINGPUBLICSCHOOLS.ORG ■ R. TAD EVERETT, SUPERINTENDENT

PLEASE READ THIS VERY IMPORTANT INFORMATION REGARDING H1N1!

Parents and Guardians,

The intent of this letter is to inform parents and the community how Sterling Public Schools (SPS) is addressing the potential H1N1 pandemic flu outbreak. Currently, we do not know the impact or extent the H1N1 flu virus will have on our schools, but to be prepared, we are taking precautionary measures.

Nothing is more important than the safety, security, and health of our students, so please know that, as the superintendent, I am taking this possible health risk very seriously. To ensure that our organization receives and provides accurate information, SPS has been working closely with professional health organizations. These include the Illinois and Whiteside County Health Departments, the Center for Disease Control (CDC), and the Illinois State Board of Education. With direction and input from these organizations, we have finalized Sterling Public Schools' formal H1N1 Plan.

Sterling Public Schools' H1N1 Plan

The first part of SPS' H1N1 Plan is to educate students, staff, parents, and the community about the seriousness of H1N1. To accomplish this SPS is designating specific times at each school to talk to our students and staff about H1N1. To inform our parents and community members, we have established a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) brochure located on our website at www.sterlingpublicschools.org. For those who desire a paper copy of this FAQ brochure, they will be located in each school's main office.

The second part of our H1N1 Plan is all about prevention. Our goal is to help students, staff, parents, and community members understand how they individually can minimize the spread of the H1N1 virus. To help prevent H1N1, Sterling Public Schools is encouraging the following:

1. The 3 C's – Clean, Cover, and Contain

It is very clear from health professionals that the most important daily component to prevent the spread of any flu virus is simply the "3 C's". We are reminding students and staff of this initiative by placing "3 C signs" all around the district.

- *Clean your hands.*
We are asking everyone to wash and sanitize his or her hands frequently. To support this, SPS is including its elementary students in a hand-washing seminar and purchasing over 200 new alcohol-based hand sanitizers for the entire District.
- *Cover your cough in your elbow or sleeve.*
- *Contain yourself by staying home when you have respiratory flu symptoms and a fever over 100 degrees.*

2. Promote Vaccinations

The next best method to protect against the seasonal flu is to get vaccinated each year. This year's flu shots will be available to community members by mid September, and can be

acquired at many local health facilities. In general, anyone who wants to reduce his or her chance of getting the flu should be vaccinated annually.

As stated in our FAQ brochure, the H1N1 flu virus is a completely different strand than the normal seasonal flu virus. Because of this fact, the seasonal flu vaccination will not build resistance to H1N1; therefore, it is important to additionally receive a H1N1 vaccination. SPS and the Whiteside County Health Department are jointly promoting that all SPS students receive a seasonal flu vaccination, as well as the H1N1 vaccination. Though we currently have not finalized an official H1N1 vaccination plan, the tentative dates will begin sometime in mid October. Please know that in the next few weeks, before these shots are administered, parents will receive much more detailed information, including but not limited to dates, times, locations, and parental permission forms.

Four key points to know about vaccinations:

1. Even though SPS would like all its students to be vaccinated this year, these shots are completely voluntary. Parents and legal guardians will choose if their child is vaccinated.
2. For those who choose to receive the shot, parents will be given the opportunity to be present at the time of vaccination.
3. The Whiteside County Health Department will be the local health agency authorized to administer the 2009 H1N1 vaccination shots. SPS will work cooperatively with the WCHD to administer these shots at each individual school at a time and date yet to be determined.
4. For those who choose to receive the shot, it will be completely free of charge.

3. Improve Record Keeping

Each one of our schools is already keeping detailed health records. The purpose is to track student and staff absences each day and report any flu-like symptoms to the Whiteside County Health Department. Please see our online FAQ brochure to determine "what are flu-like symptoms." We are asking parents and guardians to help with better record keeping by providing their child's school with detailed reasons for student absences.

4. Establish specific cleaning and sanitation protocols

SPS has been working with its custodial staff and the Whiteside County Health Department to develop specific cleaning and sanitation protocols for each of its buildings. If you would like to see the specific details of this plan, please visit our website at www.sterlingpublicschools.org.

I have established an email address to which individuals may send questions regarding Sterling Public Schools' H1N1 Plan. That email address is healthservices@sterlingschools.org. Additionally, individuals may visit our District's website at www.sterlingpublicschools.org to see further H1N1 resources.

Working with you to keep our children and students healthy,

R. Tad Everett
Superintendent of Schools
Sterling Public Schools