



Guidance for Child Care Facilities to Reduce the Spread of Influenza among Students and Staff

I. Purpose

As there has been a sharp and significant increase in seasonal influenza cases over the last few weeks in Delaware, there is concern about the impact of the disease among pre-school and school-age children and the control measures that need to be implemented to reduce its spread. This document contains the current guidance from the Delaware Division of Public Health (DPH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for school administrators to help reduce the spread of seasonal influenza in Delaware childcare facilities.

Influenza (flu) is a contagious respiratory illness that may cause mild to severe illness, and in some cases, death. It is transmitted from person to person through respiratory droplets formed when a person coughs, sneezes or talks. A person may be able to infect others as early as one day before symptoms appear and up to five to seven days after becoming sick. Childcare facilities/Early Learning Centers play a key role in protecting the health of the community from contagious diseases such as influenza. Pre-School and school-age children are very susceptible to acquiring the flu and schools may often serve as amplification points for the spread of influenza. Specific guidance regarding infectious disease control in childcare facilities can be found at <http://dhss.delaware.gov/dph/chca/files/childcaremanual.pdf>. Notify the Division of Public Health, Office of Infectious Disease Epidemiology at 1-888-295-5156 if you become aware that a child or adult in your facility has developed Influenza. This is a Reportable Condition.

Recommendations for exclusion of students and staff:

- Those who develop flu-like symptoms (fever of 100 °F or greater and a cough and/or sore throat) at school should go home and stay home until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever without the use of fever-reducing medicine.
- For those facilities (or sections of facilities) that serve children under 6 months or serve persons who are medically fragile and at high risk of serious complications from flu, DPH recommends exclusion for those with flu-like symptoms be extended to 48 hrs. after the resolution of fever. If you have questions call DPH at 302-744-4990 to discuss your particular situation



- Persons with flu-like symptoms should consult with their healthcare provider as the provider may recommend antivirals to help hasten recovery and prevent worsening of the illness.
- Those who have serious or life-threatening symptoms, such as trouble breathing, bluish skin color, fever with a rash, dizziness or severe or persistent vomiting, should seek immediate medical care.
- Separate sick students and staff from others until they can be picked up to go home. When feasible, identify a “sick room” through which others do not regularly pass. The sick room should be separated from areas used by well students for routine health activities, such as picking up medications. Sick room staff should be limited in number and staff should not be individuals with underlying conditions that put them at risk of severe illness if they contract influenza

Recommendations for everyday preventive actions:

- Encourage influenza vaccination of staff.
- Encourage students and staff to stay home when sick.
- Encourage respiratory etiquette among students and staff. This involves educating all to cover sneezes/coughs with tissue or the inner elbow rather than with hands. Immediately after, teach students and staff to wash hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer, when soap and water are not readily available.
- Encourage hand hygiene among students and staff through education, scheduled time for handwashing, and the provision of supplies (soap, water and alcohol-based hand sanitizers). Proper handwashing technique includes placing hands under running water, dispensing liquid soap, and rubbing hands and wrists together for at least 15 seconds before drying hands with a towel, and using the towel to turn off the running water.
- Encourage students and staff to keep their hands away from their nose, mouth, and eyes.
- Encourage frequent cleaning of high touch surfaces (at least 2-3 times a day routinely and each time there is obvious soilage) to prevent transmission of flu from environmental surfaces.
- Encourage frequent cleaning and disinfecting of high touch surfaces (at least 3-4 times a day and each time there is obvious soilage) to prevent transmission of flu from environmental surfaces.
- High touch surfaces such as desks, countertops, doorknobs, stairway railings, elevator buttons, hands-on learning items, faucet handles, and toys, should be cleaned daily by wiping the items down using soap (or detergent) and water. Use disinfecting wipes on electronic items that are touched often, such as phones and computers. Clean and disinfect toys between each use by individual children. Childcare facilities also require



daily disinfecting of other surfaces and items with detergent-based cleaners or EPA registered disinfectants. These products should be used according to the directions on the product label. If a surface is not visibly dirty, you can clean it with an EPA-registered product that both cleans (removes germs) and disinfects (kills germs) instead. Visit <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/school/cleaning.htm> for additional information.

- Extreme measures like closing a building to clean every surface in the building are usually not needed to prevent the flu.

When should a school or childcare facility be closed?

Any decisions about child care facility closures are being left to the appropriate authorities and should involve consultation with appropriate regulatory officials and the Division of Public Health.

For more information, visit:

<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/school/guidance.htm>

<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/school/cleaning.htm>

<https://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance/exclusion.htm>