



Charlie Crist
Governor

Ana M. Viamonte Ros, M.D., M.P.H.
State Surgeon General

Dear Parent,

As you know, flu is easily spread from person to person. Hillsborough County continues to see increases in novel H1N1 (Swine Flu) cases. Several outbreaks in group settings such as youth summer camps, sports teams, daycare facilities, group living facilities, and jails have been reported and investigated. We expect to see the number of flu cases increase as schools reopen shortly. Therefore, we are taking steps in an attempt to reduce the spread of flu in all schools located in the School District of Hillsborough County (SDHC). We want to keep the schools open to all students and functioning in a normal manner during this upcoming influenza (flu) season, **but, we need your help to do this.**

We, Hillsborough County Health Department are working closely with Hillsborough County School District to monitor H1N1 flu conditions and make decisions about the best steps to take concerning our schools. We will keep you updated with new information as it becomes available through mail-outs, e-mails (if possible), and through our SDHC Website.

For now we are doing everything we can to keep our schools functioning before and after the new school year starts. Listed below are a few things you can do to help.

- **Keep sick children at home** for at least 24 hours **after** they no longer have fever or do not have signs of fever, without using fever-reducing drugs or medications. This measure is important in reducing the number of other children, school staff, and parents who may become ill.
- **Do not send children to school if they are sick.** Children who are determined to be sick while at school **will be sent home.**
- **Encourage frequent hand washing** with soap and water for a minimum of 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. You can set a good example by doing this yourself.
- **Encourage children not to share personal items** like drinks, food or unwashed utensils, and to cover their coughs and sneezes with tissues.
- **The spread of germs can be prevented by** coughing or sneezing into the elbow, arm, or sleeve instead of the hand, when a tissue is unavailable.
- **Become familiar with the signs and symptoms of the flu.** Influenza is a viral respiratory illness that usually causes fever (temperature 100 degrees Fahrenheit or greater) with sore throat or cough. In addition, some people may have muscle aches, headaches, chills, and tiredness. About 25% of individuals with H1N1/09



Hillsborough County Health Department • Office of the Director
Post Office Box 5135 • Tampa, FL 33675-5135
Telephone: (813) 307-8008 • Fax: (813) 272-6984 • <http://www.hillscountyhealth.org>

influenza will experience diarrhea or vomiting. Not all individuals will suffer from all of the symptoms. The illness normally lasts for two to seven days.

If the flu becomes more severe, additional steps may be taken in order to prevent the spread of flu throughout the school populations such as:

- conducting active fever and flu symptom screening of students and staff as they arrive at school
- making changes to increase the space between people such as moving desks farther apart and postponing class trips, and
- dismissing students and staff from school who are sick.

We will be keeping you informed of any additional changes to our school's strategy to prevent the spread of the flu.

Additionally, the Federal Government in coordination with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) are currently in clinical trials testing a vaccine developed to lessen or reduce the impact of an H1N1 outbreak this fall. This vaccine will be separate from the normal seasonal flu vaccine offered each year. As the testing progresses and the viability of the new H1N1 vaccine is known, the federal government will begin shipping the vaccine to all states. From there the initial vaccine shipment will be sent to all counties within the State of Florida and the amounts will be based on county populations. The goal is to offer the vaccine to all students and residents in the county who wish to receive it. However, there are those that are at a higher risk if they should contract the virus.

Those who are at higher risk of disease or complications if they should contract the H1N1 virus are:

- those who are likely to come in contact with novel H1N1, and those who could infect young infants
- pregnant women,
- people who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age,
- persons between the ages of 6 months through 24 years of age, and
- people from ages 25 through 64 years who are at higher risk for novel H1N1 because of chronic health disorders or compromised immune systems.

For more information visit www.flu.gov, or call 1-800-CDC-INFO for the most current information about the flu. For more information about flu in our community and what our school is doing, visit the Hillsborough County Health Department website (www.hillsboroughcountyhealth.org). We will notify you of any additional changes to our school's strategy to prevent the spread of flu.

Sincerely,



Douglas A. Holt, M.D.
Director, Hillsborough County Health Department