



**HARRISON CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
50 UNION AVENUE
HARRISON, NY 10528**

September 2009

Dear Parents,

Welcome back to a new school year, one that we hope will be productive and healthy. Last year school districts across the country faced the challenge of how to limit the spread of a new influenza strain, H1N1. In recent weeks this influenza strain has re-emerged and has received a great deal of media coverage. While most of the cases have exhibited the same basic symptoms and recovery associated with seasonal flu, there is an appropriate concern about how best to avoid the potential for a rapid spread of H1N1 flu in school settings.

While there have been no confirmed cases of H1N1 flu in the Harrison Central School District, we will be carefully monitoring each of our schools for any potential outbreaks. We will actively monitor absenteeism in each of our buildings, and in the event cases should emerge, we will take any and all actions necessary to ensure the health and safety of your children and our employees. This could include a school closure, if necessary. **In every case, parents will be notified of pertinent information regarding any decisions that require a change to daily procedures or emerging health related issues.** Please promptly return updated health and emergency information contacts to your school so that we can work together to best protect your child and provide you with timely information.

We have insured that our cleaning protocols and our current disinfectants are effective against H1N1 bacteria. Any decisions regarding the H1N1 influenza will be developed in partnership with our medical expertise at the local, county, state, and federal levels.

This letter is to inform parents of our vigilance and preparedness for any contingency. **The safety and well-being of your children is our primary concern.**

Here's how you can help:

Behaviors that will help limit exposure:

Action Steps for Parents to Protect Your Child and Family from the Flu this School Year

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends 4 main ways you and your family may keep from getting sick with the flu at school and at home:

1. **Practice good hand hygiene** by washing your hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. Wash for about 20 seconds (about as long as it takes to sing the “Happy Birthday” song twice.) Alcohol-based hand cleaners with a minimum of 60% alcohol content are also effective.
2. **Cover your mouth and nose** with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. If you don’t have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow or shoulder; not into your hands. Dispose of used tissues properly.
3. **Stay home if you or your child is sick** for at least 24 hours after there is no longer a fever or signs of a fever (without the use of fever-reducing medicine). Keeping sick students at home means that they keep their viruses to themselves rather than sharing them with others.
4. **After consultation with your physician, have your family vaccinated** for seasonal flu and H1N1 flu when vaccines become available.

Even though most cases of H1N1 flu in the United States involve mild illness, flu spreads easily. Therefore, it is essential that no student comes to school with flu-like symptoms.

Is my child developing the seasonal or H1N1 flu?

- Be aware that symptoms of flu-like illness include: fever (over 100 degrees F.), feverishness, cough, sore throat, or runny nose. Some additional symptoms may be experienced with H1N1 flu, including muscle pain, fatigue, and sometimes vomiting or diarrhea.
- If you suspect your child is getting the flu, it is essential that **he/she does not attend school or go anywhere else—such as childcare, the mall, or sporting events—where other people would be exposed to flu germs.**
- Students exhibiting symptoms will be dismissed from school and we expect parents to follow up with their child’s physician.
- Children who are getting ill may exhibit unusual behavior, such as eating less or being irritable. Be alert for these behaviors.

If flu conditions become MORE severe, parents should consider the following steps:

- **Extend the time sick children stay home** for at least 7 days, even if they feel better sooner. People who are still sick after 7 days should continue to stay home until at least 24 hours after symptoms have completely gone away.
- **If a household member is sick, keep any school-aged brothers or sisters home for 5 days** from the time the household member became sick. Parents should monitor their health and the health of other school-aged children for fever and other symptoms of the flu.

Some important facts:

- Our guidance from state and local officials is that students can safely attend classes and schools should remain open unless there are a large number of students who contract the illness in a particular school.
- Each circumstance will be monitored carefully and considered on an individual basis based on the best available information. Decisions, including a possible school closure will be made in close consultation with local, state and federal medical officials. In the event H1N1 flu were to continue to spread, it might become necessary for health officials to close schools for a period of time.
- We work with our building principals, school nurses, district doctor, local health officials from Westchester County, New York State and the Federal Center for Disease Control to monitor each school and circumstance carefully and make decisions in consultation with them.
- The purpose of a school closing would be to decrease contact among children and reduce the risk of contracting and spreading infection. If schools are closed, children should stay at home.

Follow these steps to prepare for the flu during the 2009-2010 school year:

While it is unlikely that schools will require closing, it is important to plan ahead. Please plan your options in advance. **Arrange for child care in other than a group or day care setting.**

- Plan for child care at home if your child gets sick or their school is dismissed.
- Plan to monitor the health of the sick child and any other children in the household by checking for fever and other symptoms of flu.
- Identify if you have children who are at higher risk of serious disease from the flu and talk to your healthcare provider about a plan to protect them during the flu season. Children at high risk of serious disease from the flu include: children under 5 years of age and those children with chronic medical conditions, such as asthma and diabetes.
- Identify a separate room in the house for the care of sick family members.
- Update emergency contact lists.
- Stay in contact with your school nurse and building principal and keep them apprised of your child's condition.

Evolving situation:

This situation is evolving. We receive direction and updated information from the Westchester County Health Department, State Department of Health, State Education Department, State Emergency Management Office and the Federal Center for Disease Control. We will inform parents of new or additional guidance as it becomes available.

How will I be notified of any change of school operations?

In the event we need to share new or additional information, we will make public announcements through the media, post them on our website: www.harrisoncsd.org, on local cable channel 74, and parents will receive information via our Alertnow emergency phone notification system.

For more information:

Visit: www.flu.gov
www.cdc.gov
www.nyhealth.gov
www.schoolhealthservicesny.com

- **Contact CDC 24 Hours/Every Day**
 - 1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)
 - TTY: (888)232-6348
 - cdcinfo@cdc.gov

or the 24 hour toll-free hotline that New Yorkers across the State can use to get answers to their questions. The hotline number is 1-800-808-1987.

With your help and cooperation, we can ensure the health, safety, and well-being of our students.

Sincerely,

Louis N. Wool
Superintendent of Schools