



WILL COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT & COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER

For Immediate Release

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News media calls to Vic Reato: Media Services Manager at (815)727-5088.

READING, WRITING, ARITHMETIC, COUGH ETIQUETTE?

JOLIET – Educators from across Will County are being asked to deliver an extra classroom message when the 2009-2010 academic year commences.

“Proper cough etiquette and frequent hand washing are important topics that need to be emphasized at every opportunity in the schools,” according to Will County Health Department Executive Director John Cicero. “Vaccines are on the way to help protect us against seasonal influenza and the novel H1N1 Swine Flu, but stressing the need for personal prevention measures will help limit the spread of flu viruses in the meantime. Covering your cough and hand washing are common sense things we can all do to help keep virus transmission at a minimum.”

Cicero and Health Department Emergency Response Coordinator Jackie Mansholt shared their prevention message with Will County school superintendents early Friday at a meeting sponsored by the Regional Office of Education. The meeting took place at the Professional Development Alliance in Joliet.

The Health Department provided each school district with a packet of information containing current flu prevention recommendations developed by the National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The packets also contained a list of agency contacts and website information designed to help schools deal with influenza issues anticipated this fall.

From April 15 through July 24, CDC reported 43,771 laboratory-confirmed cases of the novel H1N1 virus; including 5,011 hospitalizations and 302 fatalities. Unlike seasonal influenza, the novel H1N1 virus disproportionately impacts school students and young adults.

The median age for 154 Will County H1N1 cases reported through July 29 was 12 years. Approximately 55 percent of cases reported by the Illinois Department of Public Health occurred among people younger than age 25.

“Our experience with the H1N1 virus last spring underscores the need to stress prevention at every turn,” Cicero continued. “Parents also need to understand that they must keep children out of school when they feel sick. The schools will definitely be sharing that information with parents.”

H1N1 flu symptoms include: fever, a cough, achiness, and chills. Diarrhea, vomiting and shortness of breath are less common, but also may be present.



Public Health
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Based on the severity of H1N1 flu-related illnesses reported thus far, CDC now recommends that people with influenza-like illness remain home until at least 24 hours after they are free from fever, or signs of a fever, without the use of fever-reducing medications. This is a change from the previous recommendation that ill persons stay home for seven days after illness onset, or until resolution of symptoms, whichever is longer.

About 55 million students and 7 million staff attend the more than 150,000 public and private schools located across America. By implementing specific prevention recommendations, school and health officials can better protect a fifth of the country's population from influenza.

For more information about flu prevention in the school setting, visit www.flu.gov.