



October 1, 2009

New York State
Office of
Children &
Family
Services

Dear Stakeholder:

As New York State prepares for the second wave of the H1N1 influenza virus, the Office of Children and Family Services would like to share some key information on prevention, mitigation, and planning strategies to help you address the health and safety concerns of your staff, clients and worksites.

David A. Paterson
Governor

Gladys Carrión, Esq.
Commissioner

As you know, in June 2009 the World Health Organization declared H1N1 a pandemic based on the global spread of the virus, rather than its severity. Although most cases of H1N1 have been mild, no one can predict the impact of future outbreaks.

Capital View Office Park

52 Washington Street
Rensselaer, NY
12144-2796

Under the leadership of Governor Paterson and NYSDOH Commissioner Daines, we have been working with our partners on the local, state and federal level to take steps both to reduce the spread and severity of illness, as well as minimize the disruptive effects of H1N1 and seasonal flu. OCFS would like to emphasize the importance of precautionary measures through the following steps that everyone can take to be prepared:

- **Stay Informed:** Please visit the following websites listed on this page regularly. Web pages are updated frequently as information changes.
<http://www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/communicable/influenza/h1n1/>
<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/>
<http://www.ocfs.state.ny.us>
- **Practice good health etiquette:**
 - Wash your hands often with soap and warm water or use a hand sanitizer.
 - Use tissue when you cough, sneeze or spit, or cough and sneeze into your elbow/upper sleeve.
 - Dispose of the tissues in a no-touch trash receptacle.
 - Keep your hands away from your face. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
 - Clean shared space frequently
- **Get Vaccinated:** DOH recommends that everyone receive both the seasonal and H1N1 flu shots, especially those in high risk groups. The CDC has targeted the following groups for vaccination against the H1N1 flu when the vaccine becomes available this fall.
 - Pregnant women
 - Individuals who live with or care for babies younger than six-months-old
 - Children/young adults age six months through 24-years-old
 - People 25 through 64 years-old who have medical



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conditions that put them at higher risk for complications from the flu.

- Healthcare and emergency medical services personnel

For information on H1N1 Flu Vaccination please contact your Local County Health Departments
http://www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/communicable/influenza/vaccination_clinics/

- **Care for yourself and for those who have the flu:** If you are sick, stay home until you are fever-free for 24 hours and limit contact with others to avoid infecting others.
- **Have a Business Continuity Plan:** Employers have a responsibility to plan for the continued operation of essential services. Special consideration should be given to planning for significant absenteeism during the upcoming flu season. Agencies that provide around the clock services for children have a vital responsibility to develop specific plans to protect employees and maintain operations at all time. The CDC has developed guidelines to assist you with developing a business continuity plan:
<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/business>

Because of your important role in caring for children and families, OCFS would also like to share with you some guidelines and resources issued from the New York State Department of Health (DOH), the New York State Education Department and the Center for Disease Control:

For H1N1 guidance on congregate care facilities:

http://www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/communicable/influenza/h1n1/facilities/docs/guidance_for_shelters.pdf

For H1N1 guidance related to children:

<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/childcare/guidance.htm>

CDC Guidance on helping child care and early childhood programs respond to the Influenza

Communications Toolkit for Childcare and Early Childcare Programs

http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/childcare/toolkit/pdf/childcare_toolkit.pdf

Information for school and childcare providers

http://www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/communicable/influenza/h1n1/schools_and_child_care_providers/

NYS State Education Department and the Department of Health have disseminated a number of joint communications:

<http://usny.nysed.gov/swine-flu-info.html>

Please consider making any or all of these links, guidelines and toolkits available on your website. It is important that we work together to make this information as widely available as possible. Preventing the flu requires that everyone take personal responsibility to embrace these

recommended mitigation measures and to work collaboratively at the community level to implement them. Thank you for your support in promoting a safe environment for the children and families of New York.

If you have further questions or concerns, you can call the H1N1 24 hour hotline at **1-800-808-1987**, **your local or county health department** or your OCFS regional office.

Sincerely,

/S/ Gladys Carrión

Gladys Carrión, Esq.
Commissioner