

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development – Victoria

For all schools, principals, regional directors, assistant regional directors, school council presidents

S280-2009 H1N1 Influenza (Human Swine Flu) 4 June 2009 10.00 am Update

General

1. Victoria is now in a modified 'Sustain' phase of its plan to manage the impact of H1N1 Influenza in our community.
2. The virus has so far been mild and can be compared to our normal winter flu.
3. There is no longer a need to quarantine everyone who has been in contact with a confirmed case of H1N1 Influenza.
4. Only confirmed cases will need to be quarantined for three days and will all continue to be given the most appropriate treatment. Household members may continue to be provided with Tamiflu, but will not be quarantined.
5. The Victorian Government will focus on those most vulnerable to influenza: those in aged care facilities, special developmental schools and hospitals.
6. The Victorian Government will continue to monitor the spread and severity of the virus throughout the community.

Voluntary quarantine and school closures

7. Classes will no longer be quarantined and schools will no longer be partially or fully closed when cases are confirmed. Settings such as special development schools and child care centres will be managed on a case-by-case basis.
8. Government schools that are currently closed due to H1N1 Influenza are to reopen. All currently closed government schools are to be reopened by Friday 5 June.
9. Students, teachers and classes that are in quarantine, as a result of having contact with a confirmed case of the virus, should return to school as soon as practicable, unless they are sick, in which case they should seek medical advice.
10. The DEECD will no longer be providing schools with information on individual confirmed cases of the virus. Schools will also no longer be required to notify the DEECD of confirmed cases within their school community.
11. Health officials are continuing to request that parents of children returning from USA, Canada, Japan, Mexico and Panama voluntarily keep their children home for seven days from arrival back in Australia.

These precautionary measures apply to all newly arrived international students and those travelling to and returning from the USA, Canada, Japan, Mexico and Panama.

The measures do not apply to teachers, who will continue with normal duties.

This decision is based on information available so far about how the virus spreads.

12. Teachers should continue to liaise with and provide learning materials to students who are quarantined as a result of either having the virus *or* having returned from USA, Canada, Japan, Mexico and Panama.

School hygiene and health management

13. The best defence against the flu is maintaining good general hygiene and schools must continue to reinforce this with children and the school community.
14. Schools should continue to review their provision of basic hygiene products (i.e. soap or liquid soap and paper towels) for students and provide these products if not already available.
15. As per general health practices, students and staff who have flu-like symptoms should remain at home.
16. Schools should remain vigilant for illness of students and staff.
17. Schools must contact the parent of a student who is unwell and make arrangements for the child to be collected from school. This particularly applies to students that may have respiratory conditions or low immunity to illness.
18. Children becoming ill at school are to be removed from their class and cared for separately until they are collected by their parents. Staff should utilise appropriate hygiene practices when attending to these children. This includes hand washing, distancing and tissues for coughing and sneezing.

Special Developmental Schools and schools with vulnerable children

19. Based on the advice from DHS and the DEECD Principal Medical Advisor, it may be necessary to close a Special Development School if a case of the virus is confirmed.

This is based on complex medical conditions of students within these schools and their low immune systems.

The closure of these schools will be assessed on a school-by-school basis by DHS and DEECD. Principals must not quarantine children or partially or fully close their schools without direction from DEECD.

20. Special developmental schools should be especially vigilant in avoiding cross infection between students and teachers and in ensuring children obtain their regular flu vaccine.
21. Children who show any signs of illness should be sent home (as per 17 and 18) and the family advised to see a doctor.

Senior secondary students

22. VCE exams and the GAT will proceed, as planned.
23. VCE students who have been confirmed as having H1N1 Influenza or who are unwell with flu-like symptoms can apply for Special Provision from the VCAA. Contact the VCAA Special Provision Unit on 1800 205 455.

Communicating with parents

24. Schools should issue the attached message to your parents as well as widely promote the poster from DHS (also attached) – for example, on school websites, noticeboards, and in common areas.
25. It is important that you remind parents to keep their contact details up-to-date.

Actions Required

- DHS will no longer be asking DEECD to quarantine classes, or partially or fully close schools. Principals must not quarantine children, or partially or fully close their schools.
- Schools that have been closed due to H1N1 Influenza are to reopen.
- Schools should continue to reinforce to children and the school community the importance of basic hygiene practices.
- Schools should communicate these changes to their school community. (Refer to attachments)
- Contact the DEECD Incident Coordination Centre on 1800 059 866 with any school-related queries or concerns.

Further information

School-related queries or concerns can be directed to the DEECD Incident Coordination Centre – 1800 059 866 – Monday to Friday, 9.00 am to 5.00 pm, (closed public holidays).

Specific health queries about H1N1 Influenza can be directed to any of the following:

- The **Swine Influenza Hotline Tel. 180 2007**
- **Nurse-on-Call Tel. 1300 606 024** – for expert health information and advice (24 hours, 7 days)
- **Your doctor (GP)** – if you have an influenza-like illness (fever, cough and fatigue).

Prof. Peter Dawkins
Secretary