

FRANKLIN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
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Public Health Update
November 2, 2009

The Franklin Public Schools, along with the Town Administrator, the Director/Board of Health, the Fire Department, other town officials and representatives from Dean College, Tri County Regional Vocational Technical High School and the Benjamin Franklin Charter School continue to meet regularly as part of a town preparedness team in an effort to develop a coordinated response to a possible outbreak of H1N1 influenza. We are following the most current information from the CDC and MA Department of Public Health (DPH).

The availability of flu vaccines is behind schedule as was originally anticipated by the DPH and the CDC. We are awaiting information from the Board of Health as to when vaccine will be delivered. Once the Board of Health has received a sufficient number of doses we will work with local officials to implement the plan established by the town preparedness team for the administration of vaccine to school age children and other high risk groups. When the vaccines and protocol for administration are available we will disseminate information to the community regarding H1N1 clinics.

It is important to reiterate that the Franklin Public schools **will not** be administering vaccines; rather, the Department of Public Health and the Board of Health will run any vaccination program. We are planning to run the clinics at the Franklin High School Field House and small gym. Clinics will be scheduled when school is not in session, most likely in the early evening. Parents will be expected to accompany their children and sign the appropriate consent forms. We continue to await direction from those agencies and communicate regularly as new information becomes available. In the meantime, we have a proactive plan in place that we continue to adjust based upon the most current information so that we are prepared to respond quickly and efficiently as necessary.

At the current time, there have been a handful of isolated, reported cases of Type A Flu scattered in schools across the district. It is unclear whether these are cases of H1N1 or seasonal flu. Should we see a pattern or clustering of cases of influenza within a specific classroom or grade level, we will send out notification to parents as appropriate.

Flu/Influenza is a viral respiratory infection, which presents with a rapid onset of high fever (100F or greater) cough and/or sore throat and other symptoms that may include body aches, headache, chills fatigue, vomiting and/or diarrhea.

The following are standard recommendations for the prevention of illness and pertain to flu/ influenza:

- Frequent hand washing with soap and water or with alcohol based hand sanitizer

- Keep hands away from face; avoid rubbing eyes or putting fingers in mouth or nose
- Use cough hygiene by covering mouth or coughing into sleeve at elbow
- **Stay home from school or work if symptomatic**
- If symptoms include fever and respiratory symptoms consult with physician immediately

Within the schools, we have installed **non-alcohol based Purell** dispensers in common areas throughout the schools. *Please note that because of state fire codes, we are unable to store Purell for the bathroom dispensers, due to the high alcohol content.* The facilities staff disinfects classrooms and surfaces daily with a variety of EPA approved anti-bacterial products. Students also may carry small bottles of Purell or other liquid disinfectant with them. We will continue to discuss and encourage common sense precautionary measures such as thoroughly washing hands with soap and water and education and reminders about appropriate respiratory etiquette. We ask that parents *please do not send children into school or place your children on the bus if they are demonstrating symptoms* as it exposes others and increases the risk of outbreak. If students are sent to the school nurse with flu-like symptoms, the parent/guardian will be contacted and the child will be sent home as per the school district policy and procedure for Communicable Diseases. Students with flu-like symptoms will wait in separate areas designated within each school for parent pick up. The school health professional and the Office of the Superintendent are closely monitoring absentee rates and we have a database to document to the site of any flu cases. There are regular updates on the Franklin Board of Health web site, including email contacts.

For additional information on the H1N1 flu you may visit www.cdc.gov/swineflu or www.mass.gov/dph/flu.

Government documents and advisories are also posted on the district web site www.franklin.k12.ma.us.

Regards,

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