

H1N1 Update

October 20, 2009

Dear Parent,

This update includes information on student attendance, criteria for closing schools, and the new H1N1 vaccine schedule released by the Carroll County Health Department (CCHD).

Student Attendance

We are continuing to see an increased number of student absences, but not in all schools.

Some parents have requested specific numbers of confirmed H1N1 flu cases in each school. My last update listed the various obstacles of providing this information. I also indicated that we were transmitting student attendance information to the CCHD to help them monitor illness in our schools. Specifically, the CCHD receives student attendance percentages for our schools when the attendance rate drops below 90%.

I am now receiving parent requests for the same student attendance information we are providing to the CCHD. This information is available to the public. To make it easier for you to obtain the data, we are including this information on our website.

To view this same information, you may go directly to www.carrollk12.org/admin/commedia/h1n1.asp. Or, you may choose to visit our school system website at www.carrollk12.org and click on the H1N1 logo at the top of the page. We have also listed each school's 2008-2009 year-end attendance data for comparison purposes.

Keep in mind these limiting factors if you choose to view this information:

- Attendance percentage reflects illness and non-illness absences.
- Student illness absences are reported by parents. We cannot confirm the accuracy of any reported illness.
- Attendance data will run one day behind.

Closing Schools

There are several rumors that we are planning school closures. Under the guidance of the Department of Mental Health and Hygiene, schools will only close if the number of staff or student absences exceeds the number we need to safely operate our schools and only with permission of State Health Officials and the Maryland State Department of Education. Given this scenario, closing schools will only be an option if we have significant absences over an extended

period. I have not had any discussions with our local or state health officers regarding school closures in Carroll County. If school closures become a possibility, you will hear the information directly from the school system.

Community H1N1 Vaccine Clinic

The CCHD asks that we convey the attached vaccine schedule to our parent community. If you cannot view the attachment, please call the CCHD Flu Hotline at 410-876-3003.

Prevention Tips

Teach your children to wash their hands often with soap and water. You can set a good example by doing this yourself.

Teach your children not to share personal items like drinks, food or unwashed utensils, and to cover their coughs and sneezes with tissues. If they don't have a tissue, they should cough or sneeze into their upper sleeve, not their hands.

Know the signs and symptoms of the flu. Symptoms of the flu include fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit or greater), cough, sore throat, a runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, and feeling very tired. Some people may also vomit or have diarrhea.

Don't send children to school if they are sick. Any children who are sick at school may be sent home. Having children stay home when sick allows them to rest and helps you to monitor their health closely. Keeping your sick child home protects fellow students and school staff.

For more information on the flu, visit www.flu.gov, or call 1-800-CDC-INFO. You may also visit the Carroll County Health Department's website at <http://www.carrollhealthdepartment.dhmdh.md.gov/>

Sincerely,

Chuck Ecker