

**WASHINGTON TOWNSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
**Department of Student & Special Education Services**  
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**Cheryl L. Simone,**  
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Superintendent  
Exts. 6401/6402

October 27, 2009

**Joseph**  
**Vandenberg, M.A.**  
Asst. Supt.  
Curriculum/  
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Washington Township Schools and Swine Flu

**Mike Rolan, M.A.**  
Asst Supt. Student &  
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A number of parents have contacted schools in the Washington Township School District to inquire about the H1N1 Flu and its impact on our schools. As of Tuesday, October 27, 2009 only a handful of confirmed cases of H1N1 flu have been reported. As school opened on Monday, October 26, 2009 we did see a large increase in the number of student s who were absent from school. However, we cannot determine if the number of students absent is related to the H1N1 virus, seasonal flu virus, or other types of illnesses that occur on a daily basis.

**Margaret Meehan,**  
**CPA**  
School Business  
Admin./  
Board Secretary  
Exts. 6501/6502

Washington Township Public Schools have taken a number of actions to reduce the spread of not only the H1N1 Flu virus but also to reduce the number of illness that can impact children at any time. One way that Washington Township is attempting to reduce the spread of the H1N1 virus is by closely monitoring information from the national Center for Disease Control, as well as information provided by the New Jersey Department of Health, Gloucester County Department of Health, and the New Jersey Department of Education.

**Janice Giel, M.A.**  
School/Community  
Relations  
Coordinator  
Exts. 6550/6510

The H1N1 flu virus can be spread in two ways, by air and by contact. According to epidemiologists, the virus is airborne when an infected person coughs or sneezes and droplets are released into the air. School nurses and teachers in Washington Township schools are encouraging students and staff to exercise good "cough etiquette" when coughing or sneezing. This should be exercised at home as well as at school. If you do not have a handkerchief or tissue, you should cough into your hand or into your sleeve. Because the droplets that are released when you cough or sneeze are heavy, they often drop to the ground quickly. For this reason the CDC and health officials recommend that you maintain a distance of three to six feet when talking to another individual.

When you do have to cough or sneeze into your hand, hand-washing for durations of at least 20 seconds is recommended. A person who has coughed or sneezed into his or her hand and then touched a door knob, a desk top, or a pencil has more than likely contaminated those items. Another person touches those areas and the virus is spread. Washington Township school staff encourages our students to wash their hands often. Should you not be in a location where you have access to soap and water it is recommend that students use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Washington Township has increased the number of hand sanitizers in the

schools and custodial staff are checking to ensure that soap and paper towels are well-stocked in our restrooms.

The onset of H1N1 is “usually pretty quick.” Once a person is exposed to the virus, symptoms usually begin to appear within one to seven days, but generally within three to five days. Once infected, a person can infect others for up to 24 hours before symptoms begin and up to 24 hours after a fever has returned to normal without the use of a fever reducer.

Both health officials and the Washington Township School District recommend staying home if you are ill. Parents have also inquired about perfect attendance awards and how the H1N1 will impact those students who have maintained perfect attendance through out their school career. At this point, school officials have not come to a district decision regarding this issue. One school has requested that they be permitted to not recognize perfect attendance this school year. This is a matter that will continued to be studied as we go further into the flu season.

Health care professionals have issued conflicting advice on the use of masks to prevent the spread of H1N1. According to some epidemiologists masks are not effective in preventing the spread of flu except on health care providers who undergo a “special fitting” that is an extensive process. Washington Township has determined that masks will be issued to those students who are exhibiting “influenza like illnesses.” Although we may not be able to provide the student with 100% protection we may be able to slow the spread of a number of viruses.

Each of our schools in Washington Township have encouraged staff responsible for cleaning our buildings to take extra care in wiping down desk tops, door knobs, and those areas which students and staff come in contact with on a daily basis. As well, those who transport our students are being asked to take extra care to make sure that their buses are cleaned after each run.

Washington Township schools recently sent one administrator and one school nurse to a county-wide meeting where the possibility of schools becoming vaccination sites was discussed. There were a number of questions raised at these meetings which caused administrators and school nurses to agonize over the decision to participate as a vaccination clinic. At this time, the Washington Township Board of Education has determined that it would not serve as a vaccination site. We believe that the decision to vaccinate your child is a decision that should be determined by the parents and their health care provider.

The Center for Disease Control does not support closing schools. At this time there are no plans to close Washington Township Schools. The school district will continue to monitor information being provided by the Center for Disease Control and to make decisions based on the most current data available to us.

There are a number of resources available to parents who want to know what they can do to protect their families. These websites are listed at the bottom of this letter. Parents are encouraged to check these sites in order to have access to the most recent information available. In an effort to assist parents in gaining that information, links to some of the most noted websites are being provided for you. The New Jersey Department of Health has published on its website **A Guide for Parents**. This document will serve as a resource to assist parents in protecting their families.

Resources for information:

[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

[www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov)

<http://www.state.nj.us/health/flu/h1n1.shtml>



## State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
PO Box 500  
TRENTON, NJ 08625-0500

JON S. CORZINE  
Governor

LUCILLE E. DAVY  
Commissioner

October 29, 2009

TO: Chief School Administrators/Charter School Lead Persons  
Nonpublic School Administrators

FROM: Lucille Davy, Commissioner

SUBJECT: H1N1 Influenza Website

I ask that you please read the attached message from Department of Health and Senior Services Commissioner Heather Howard on H1N1 Influenza.

The Department of Education would also like to take this opportunity to remind districts to stay in close communication with your local health department and take all steps recommended to limit the spread of influenza in our schools. Please remind parents/guardians that symptoms of H1N1 include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headaches, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting. If a child is exhibiting these symptoms, please remind parents/guardians to immediately call the child's physician and keep their child home from school.

Also, parents can help us limit the spread of influenza by teaching their children the following:

- Wash hands often, especially after coughing or sneezing. Washing with soap and hot water for at least 20 seconds is ideal. Alcohol-based hand sanitizer cleaners are also effective.
- Keep their hands away from their face and avoid touching their mouth, nose or eyes.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or by coughing into the inside of their elbow.
- Stay home when sick.

The Department of Education will continue to distribute the *State of New Jersey H1N1 Influenza Update* and provide districts with the most up-to-date information and guidance regarding H1N1 Influenza.

As noted in the attached message, for more information and questions, please call the New Jersey H1N1 toll-free public information hotline on weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at **1-866-321-9571**. Call center operators will be able to provide general information about H1N1, vaccine safety and availability information, symptoms of H1N1 and flu prevention measures.

We appreciate your assistance in ensuring that we do everything we can to make sure our schools are a safe place.

LED/JH/BS/pp:commissionermemoHINI102909  
Attachment

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PO Box 360  
Trenton, NJ 08625-0360

Heather Howard  
Commissioner

For Release:  
October 28, 2009

For Further Information Contact:  
Office of Communications  
(609) 984-7160

## Statement from Department of Health and Senior Services Commissioner Heather Howard on



STATE OF NEW JERSEY  
**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SENIOR SERVICES**



most recent information on H1N1 influenza. There are a number of tools that New Jerseyans can use to stay informed, and simple everyday actions we can take to stay healthy.

New Jersey opened an **H1N1 Information Hotline - 1-866-321-9571** earlier this month. Because of increased interest, call center hours will be extended to weekends. This toll-free public hotline will now be accessible seven days a week from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Call center operators will be able to provide general information about H1N1, vaccine safety and availability information, symptoms of H1N1 and flu preventive measures. Since opening the hotline, the Department has answered more than 7,730 calls from the public.

New Jersey's flu activity has moved from regional to widespread. This means that H1N1 flu is present in a majority of counties throughout the state. While any type of flu is cause for concern, it is not cause for alarm. I urge all residents to stay informed and take simple preventive measures to stay healthy.

I also want to take this opportunity to provide an update on vaccine production and availability, vaccine safety, and H1N1 target populations.

### **New Jersey's H1N1 Public Information Initiative**

In an effort to provide critical information to the public, New Jersey created a Find a Flu Shot Locator, an H1N1 Resource Center website, and a toll-free hotline. These resources will help ensure residents and health care providers have access to information and can obtain accurate responses to their questions.

The State established an **H1N1 Resource Center website** that includes important information and timely updates on H1N1 flu in New Jersey. The website can be found at [www.nj.gov/health](http://www.nj.gov/health). Additional information on H1N1 flu is available at the federal website, [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov).

The **Find a Flu Shot Locator** can be accessed at [www.nj.gov/health](http://www.nj.gov/health). Residents can find where H1N1 flu clinics are being held throughout the State. Not all clinics are included on this list because some are being offered to very specific target populations, such as school-based efforts and private doctors' offices. Public flu clinics will be posted on this site as soon as they are scheduled. Additional public health clinics will be scheduled as more vaccine arrives.

### **H1N1 Vaccine Production and Availability**

Many residents are concerned with the slower than expected arrival of H1N1 vaccine. Please understand that the H1N1 vaccine, like other vaccines, is produced by manufacturers and distributed by the federal government. We will do all that we can to ensure orders are placed in a timely manner and that the vaccine is getting to the target populations.

As of October 28, 2009, New Jersey ordered approximately 1.3 million doses of vaccine and more than 567,000 doses have been distributed to nearly 891 providers statewide. Shipments of the H1N1 vaccine will continue to arrive throughout this month and into the winter.

The federal government has assured us that ultimately there will be enough vaccine for everyone who wants it. However, with only limited vaccine available at this time, it is important to first target the individuals most susceptible to H1N1 flu.

### **H1N1 Target Populations**

It is recommended that certain target groups be among the first to receive the H1N1 vaccine as it becomes available. These groups include:

- Pregnant women
- Household contacts and caregivers for children younger than 6 months of age
- Healthcare and emergency medical services personnel
- All people from 6 months through 24 years of age
- Persons aged 25 through 64 years who have health conditions associated with higher risk of medical complications from influenza

### **H1N1 Vaccine is Safe**

Many parents have raised concerns about the safety of the new H1N1 vaccine. All vaccines, including the H1N1 vaccine, are held to the highest standard of safety and are continually monitored. Each year, millions of Americans safely receive seasonal flu vaccines. The H1N1 vaccine is made the same way as seasonal flu vaccine by the same manufacturers that make seasonal flu vaccine. In addition, the National Institute of Health (NIH) has conducted clinical trials for the H1N1 vaccine. The vaccine has been tested and safely used in children, pregnant woman, and adults.