



STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN RESOURCES
Bureau for Public Health
Office of Epidemiology and Prevention Services
350 Capitol Street, Room 125
Charleston, West Virginia 25301

Earl Ray Tomblin
Governor

Karen L. Bowling
Cabinet Secretary

December 18, 2014

Dear Stakeholders:

Re: School Closure Due to Influenza


Influenza season has arrived early in several regions of West Virginia. West Virginia has seen an increase in influenza activity including a greater number of reported school outbreaks. Influenza A (H3N2) viruses are most common so far. Influenza A (H3N2) predominant seasons are associated with more severe illness especially among young children than during influenza A (H1N1) or influenza B-predominant seasons. This memo is being sent out to provide some guidance to Local Health Departments and school officials about school closure due to influenza.

The following recommendations should be taken into consideration when dealing with an influenza outbreak at a school:

1. All outbreaks should be immediately reported to your local health department.
2. Schools experiencing influenza outbreaks are strongly encouraged to educate parents, students and staff on the importance of vaccination, using good hand hygiene, and staying home from school or work when sick.
3. Maintain routine general cleaning procedures during influenza outbreaks. Additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning is not recommended to kill influenza.
4. School closure is not recommended for influenza outbreaks unless there is not sufficient staff to instruct students or maintain a safe and healthy environment.
5. In event that a school cannot maintain a healthy and safe school environment, a collective decision should be made regarding school closure through close communication with state and local school officials and state and local health officials.

For questions or concerns, please contact your local health department or the Division of Infectious Disease Epidemiology at 304-558-5358.

Sincerely,


Loretta E. Haddy, PhD, MS
State Epidemiologist and Director