



PUPIL PERSONNEL SERVICES

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Dear Parent/Guardian:

Over the last several days, various news reports have provided information about an illness known as the swine influenza A. Swine flu, as it is commonly called, is a respiratory disease that typically infects only pigs. However in March and early April, cases of swine flu have been reported in humans. Confirmed and suspected cases of the disease have been reported in several countries as well as in various states throughout the United States. The World Health Organization raised the level of the influenza pandemic alert from phase 3 to phase 5 as of April 30th. The status change is based on the evidence of human-to-human transmission of the virus and the ability of the virus to cause community level outbreaks. As a precautionary measure, the United States declared a public health emergency on April 26th.

According to Dr. Richard Besser, acting director of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), most U.S. cases thus far have been considered mild. He cautioned, however, that the virus could cause more serious symptoms and health officials anticipate the virus to likely spread. The current flu vaccine is not expected to provide protection against the swine flu. Health officials have also indicated that the swine flu can be treated with certain antiviral drugs.

Symptoms of the swine flu in people are similar to those of seasonal flu and include fever, fatigue or lethargy, lack of appetite, coughing, runny nose, sore throat, and severe body aches. Some individuals with swine flu have also reported nausea, vomiting and diarrhea, according to health officials.

To assist in deterring the spread of the disease, it is important for all communities to practice prevention measures. Our school staff will continue to remind the children of good hygiene habits. This includes using a tissue when coughing or sneezing and disposing of it immediately after use. Children can also cover a cough or a sneeze with the crux of their elbow when a tissue is not available. Children and parents/guardians are also reminded to wash hands often with warm water and soap, especially after coughing or sneezing. When soap and water is not available, a 60 percent alcohol based gel may be used to clean hands. We are also asking parent/guardians to continually remind their children to keep hands away from their eyes, nose and mouth.

Our school nurses will continue to follow normal procedures and will send home any student who is exhibiting flu-like symptoms. In such cases, the nurse will recommend that parents/guardians follow up with their child's physician. If your child exhibits flu-like symptoms at home, we are requesting that parents/guardians do not send their child to school and contact their child's doctor. Also, if the doctor suspects or confirms that your child has contracted the swine flu, the child's parent/guardian should report the case to the school nurse. Children should remain at home until they are symptom free. The CDC is recommending that children remain symptom free for a period of 24 hours prior to returning to school.

Please be assured that as part of the district's pandemic flu response procedures, all school nurses will inform their principals who in turn will inform the director of pupil services of suspected and/or confirmed cases of the disease. Principals and the director will also monitor patterns of absenteeism within their schools. The Director of Operations has already instructed his maintenance staff concerning the cleaning of classrooms to prevent the spread of illness as a precautionary measure.

In closing, the Phoenixville Area School District will continue to monitor this issue with Chester County and state health officials. We will share any updates as necessary. If you have any questions or concerns, please call your child's school nurse. For more information regarding swine influenza, please visit the following websites: www.cdc.gov/flu/swine/index.htm or www.cdc.gov/flu/swine/recommendations.htm.

Sincerely,

Ann Marie Geissel
Director of Pupil Services
Phoenixville Area School District