

September 25, 2009

Dear Parents/Guardians,

As we move into the fall, health agencies world-wide are continuing to closely monitor the status of H1N1 and “seasonal” flu. Locally, our office continues to work with school districts and the Stanislaus County Health Services Agency (HSA) to support consistent communication and protocols across the county. I want to commend our schools for the tremendous job they are doing in responding to this situation, and give you a quick update on the status in our county.

As you may know, schools throughout Stanislaus County are reporting absence rates to the HSA on a regular basis. Officials at HSA this week confirmed there have been no upward trends or dramatic spikes in absenteeism.

While this is great news, we must continue to be vigilant. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) note that this flu season could be worse because of the new H1N1 flu, and are cautioning the public to prepare for an early, and possibly severe, flu season.

Prevention continues to be the highest priority!

What can you do to protect yourself and your family?

“Seasonal Flu” Vaccine - HSA and CDC recommend a yearly **“seasonal flu” vaccine** as the first and most important step in protecting against the three seasonal viruses that research suggests will be most common this year. The nasal formulation is the easiest for schoolchildren. This vaccine is already available at many locations throughout our county – you can check with your family health provider or go to www.hsahealth.org for the most current schedule of county-sponsored clinics.

H1N1 Flu Vaccine – Media reports suggest that this vaccine will become available in October. However, according to local public health officials it is VERY unlikely that it will be available for school-aged children until later this fall. Earliest priorities will be healthcare workers and pregnant women.

It is also important that we continue to remember everyday preventive actions such as good hand and respiratory hygiene and staying home from school/work when sick. Together we can all play a role in minimizing the spread of flu this year.

Sincerely,



Tom Changnon
Stanislaus County Superintendent of Schools