



Building Futures ... Together

To: NCTC Employees
From: Julie Fenning, Safety Officer
Re: Seasonal Flu and H1N1 Flu Information
Date: September 2, 2009

The nation is facing an outbreak of the seasonal flu and possibly the H1N1 flu. We are working closely with the Minnesota Health Department to monitor flu conditions and make decisions about the best steps to take concerning our institution. We will keep you updated with new information as it becomes available.

As you may know, the flu can be spread easily from person to person. Therefore, we are taking steps to prevent the spread of flu at NCTC, **but we need your help to accomplish this.**

Here are a few things you can do to help:

- **Practice good hand hygiene** by washing your hands with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. NCTC will be providing hand sanitizer throughout the campuses. Computer and keyboards and door handles will be disinfected daily.
- **Practice respiratory etiquette** by covering your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow or shoulder, not into your hands. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth; germs are spread this way.
- **Know the signs and symptoms of the flu.** Symptoms of flu include fever or chills and cough or sore throat. In addition, symptoms of flu can include runny nose, body aches, headache, tiredness, diarrhea, or vomiting. A fever is a temperature taken with a thermometer that is equal to or greater than 100 degrees Fahrenheit. Signs of fever include: if the person feels very warm, has a flushed appearance, or is sweating or shivering.
- **Stay home if you have flu or flu-like illness for at least 24 hours after you no longer have a fever** (100 degrees Fahrenheit) or signs of a fever. This should be determined without the use of fever-reducing medications (ibuprofen or acetaminophen).
- **Talk with your health care providers about whether you should be vaccinated for seasonal flu.** Also if you are at higher risk for flu complications from 2009 H1N1 flu, you should consider getting the H1N1 vaccine when it becomes available. People at higher risk for 2009 H1N1 flu complications include pregnant women and people with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, heart disease, or diabetes). For more information about priority groups for vaccination, visit www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/vaccination/acip.htm.

The Minnesota Department of Health has established a Web site for H1N1 issues which can be found at <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/flu/h1n1/>.

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In addition, we encourage you to explore the Center for Disease Control Website, <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/> which contains excellent general information on H1N1 and preparation. Individuals with illness or with family members who are ill will find this site particularly helpful. We are looking at two major phases of the predicted flu outbreak:

Phase One – Seasonal Flu (late August – September)

- Employees are encouraged to get vaccinated against the seasonal flu and/or the 2009 H1N1 flu. If you have any questions about whether it is appropriate, you should consult a health care professional. **Flu vaccinations are available on each campus on October 12th in East Grand Forks from 7-9 am in room 115 (former 106) and October 13 in Thief River Falls from 7-10 am in room 545.**
- Prevention is key. Seasonal flu information flyers and posters will be displayed around the campuses and hygiene and sanitation supplies will be available for your use. These include hand sanitizers, gloves for employees with high exposure to germs, disinfectant wipes, masks, etc. Other measures will be taken to minimize the spread of germs including computers/keyboards will be wiped down daily and door knobs/counters in high traffic areas will be disinfected routinely.
- Employees are encouraged to stay home if you are ill.
- Faculty are encouraged to plan for student absences during this time and consider attendance requirements so students are not penalized for illness-related absences, if possible. Kent Hanson will be sending an additional communication to faculty regarding classroom considerations.

Phase Two – H1N1 Preparedness (late September – October)

- Recognize that information on H1N1 is changing daily. NCTC will stay up-to-date with local health department and through the resources provided.
- Prevention messages will be reinforced: cover your cough, stay home when sick. These messages are even more important once H1N1 has reached our campuses and communities.
- Supplies will be provided: hand sanitizer, vinyl gloves, disinfecting wipes, protective masks, etc. throughout the campuses for employee use. When these supplies are available, information regarding their location will be communicated.
- Opportunities that allow for social distancing when possible will be explored such as cancellation of activities and events.
- Information regarding H1N1 vaccine availability will be communicated appropriately.
- Measures will be taken to minimize the spread of the flu within the institution. An example may be that excess traffic is restricted and/or the number of entrance doors may be limited to those equipped with hand-sanitizer for employees and students to utilize upon entrance to the facility.

Employees should consider departmental needs and determine the necessity to order supplies which are necessary for the continuation of services in their respective areas in the event distribution channels from vendors are interrupted.

The IT Department is working on establishing a web site that will be available in the event H1N1 escalates to pandemic proportions at our campuses or in our communities. IT is also working on computer preparations in the event telecommuting arrangements need to be made with specific employees to ensure essential college business activities continue.

Separate correspondence will be distributed to students via e-mail. Employees will be copied on the correspondence so you are able to answer questions students may have.

Information will be shared as it is obtained regarding best practices and resources as they are available. Please contact me if you believe there is additional information that the college community needs to know to help all of us respond more effectively.