

## **Influenza (Flu) Questions & Answers (Q & A)**

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### **General Q & A:**

- Does the Dallas County Community College District have a plan to deal with an outbreak of H1N1 (swine) influenza? ***DCCCD has an emergency operations plan that was developed by the district's department of risk management. The plan is designed to adapt to specific situations or circumstances like the H1N1 influenza pandemic that started in spring 2009.***
- Under what conditions would a location or a facility close because of an outbreak of (H1N1) influenza? ***Any decision to close a location would be based on a recommendation from the Dallas County Health and Human Services Department and/or at the discretion of a college/location president, in consultation with the chancellor's office and the department of risk management. Currently, Dallas County Health and Human Services does not recommend canceling events due to H1N1. Instead, the department recommends that everyone follow good health practices such as washing hands and covering mouths with a tissue to cough or sneeze.***
- What would be the basis/rationale for closing a DCCCD location/facility because of an outbreak of (H1N1) influenza? ***Dallas County Health and Human Services is not recommending that locations close due to H1N1. If a campus remains open, both confirmed and probable cases should be isolated. Individuals who have suspected cases should be sent to the campus health center and/or their personal physician.***
- Who makes the decision to close a location or facility because of a reported/probable/confirmed case of H1N1 influenza? ***The college/location president would make the decision to close a facility, in consultation with the chancellor's office, the department of risk management and Dallas County Health and Human Services.***
- May an event be canceled because of an outbreak of (H1N1) influenza? Who makes that decision and how should the decision be communicated (and by whom)? ***Yes, an event may be canceled because of an outbreak of (H1N1) influenza. Currently, Dallas County Health and Human Services does not recommend canceling events due to H1N1. Instead, the department recommends that everyone follow good health practices such as washing hands and covering mouths with a tissue to cough or sneeze. The college president would make that decision, in consultation with the chancellor's office and the department of risk management. Consistency is important as we make these types of decisions.***

- How and when would such a closure be reported to students? To employees? To the general public? ***Initial announcements may be made using the campus telephone PA and/or fire PA systems if a closing occurred during classroom hours. Other announcements may be posted on the district/college web site and social media. Another option is using the district's notification system "DCCCD Alerts," which uses emails, text messages and voice messages. Messages are sent to emails and phone numbers provide to the district by students and employees. The general public could be notified using announcements sent to area news outlets by the district's public and governmental affairs/media relations office.***
- Who would be responsible for reporting a closure to students, employees and the general public? ***A college closing announcement would come from the college president's office.***
- Should all colleges/locations close if one college or location must close? ***No. Each college/location is evaluated individually, based on its own unique circumstances.***
- Are we providing hand sanitizers/facilities for hand washing and other sanitary practices that help fight the spread of germs? ***It is recommended that colleges provide hand sanitizers.***
- What kinds of cleaning processes are used in buildings on campus to help ensure that students, faculty, staff and administrators have a healthy environment in which they can learn and work? ***The custodial staff members use an industry-recognized disinfectant in their daily cleaning.***
- How often are facilities and bathrooms cleaned? ***Restrooms are cleaned an average of four times each day. Facilities in general are cleaned at least twice daily.***
- What types of information will the district provide to all of its locations about the H1N1 influenza situation? How often? How much? Who will provide it? ***The district's department of risk management will provide briefings from the Dallas County Health Department as they are received, plus information from other sources, to the chancellor's staff. The information will be disseminated to the colleges through the office of public and governmental affairs/media relations.***
- What teams are collaborating to provide information to the district about H1N1 influenza procedures and decision-making processes? ***The following teams are collaborating to provide information to the district about H1N1 procedures and decision-making processes: legal counsel, risk management, the chancellor's office, district human resources, public and governmental affairs/media relations and our college health centers.***
- Should we share information among colleges and locations about steps they are taking to prevent the spread of germs/H1N1 influenza on our campuses, such as not shaking hands at graduation, etc? ***Yes. It is important to know what other campuses are doing and to be consistent. The district's office of public and governmental affairs/media relations is the preferred channel for sharing information.***
- Are we taking any special precautions in food service areas? Are normal sanitation and health procedures sufficient to help prevent the spread of H1N1 influenza? What do we require of food service workers who come in contact with food, students and employees each day? ***Normal sanitation and health procedures are sufficient to help prevent the spread of H1N1.***

- Where can students, faculty, staff and administrators go for more information about H1N1 influenza? <http://www.dallascounty.org/departments/hhs/home.html>
- Who and how are we working with other agencies in Dallas County to handle the H1N1 influenza pandemic? *Staff members in the DCCCD risk management department are collaborating with Dallas County Health and Human Services, Dallas County Emergency Management, State of Texas Emergency Management, the Texas Department of Health, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and the Texas Higher Education Emergency Management Council.*
- How long will this pandemic continue? Who determines when it is over? *The length of the pandemic is unknown. Dallas County Health and Human Services may provide information concerning when the pandemic is considered finished.*
- Who do I call for help? *Feel free to call the district's department of risk management with any questions.*

### **Student-related Q & A:**

- May a faculty member, staff member or administrator tell a student that she or he must see a nurse/go to the health center if the student exhibits symptoms of H1N1 influenza? *Yes. However, sneezing and/or coughing alone does not meet the definition of influenza-like illness symptoms. Remember that most (H1N1) influenza cases present with a fever of 100 F or higher. Consider altering policies on missed classes, examinations and late assignments so that students' academic concerns do not prevent them from staying home when ill or prompt them to return to class or take examinations while still symptomatic and potentially infectious. Policies on non-academic programs also may need to be reviewed. Example: required attendance to be considered for a student organization.*
- May a faculty member, staff member or administrator tell a student who is ill that she or he cannot return to campus until they are well? *Yes. However, sneezing and/or coughing alone does not meet the definition of influenza-like-illness symptoms. Remember that most (H1N1) influenza cases present with a fever of 100 F or higher. Consider altering policies on missed classes, examinations and late assignments so that students' academic concerns do not prevent them from staying home when ill or prompt them to return to class or take examinations while still symptomatic and potentially infectious. Policies on non-academic programs may also need to be reviewed. Example: required attendance to be considered for a student organization.*
- May a nurse tell a student that she or he must leave campus and/or see a doctor? *Yes. However, sneezing and/or coughing alone does not meet the definition of influenza-like-illness symptoms. Remember that most (H1N1) influenza cases present with a fever of 100 F or higher. Consider altering policies on missed classes, examinations and late assignments so that students' academic concerns do not prevent them from staying home when ill or prompt them to return to class or take examinations while still symptomatic and potentially infectious. Policies on non-academic programs may also need to be reviewed. Example: required attendance to be considered for a student organization.*
- What should faculty, staff or administrators do if a student goes to the health center because he or she is ill and the center is closed? *Direct the student to her or his doctor or public health care*

***provider. The preferred course is for the college nurse to take that action. These cases should be reported to the campus health center for follow-up and recordkeeping.***

- What procedures would be followed if a college or the district should find it necessary to cancel/postpone final exams? Who would make that decision? How would it be handled? ***In the event of a college closure, the college president would consult appropriate college personnel concerning the best way to handle final exams or missed exams. Faculty should be encouraged to develop a contingency plan for their classes that is fair to students and allows for a scenario in which students could not come to campus and, as a result, miss their tests.***
- What procedures would be followed if a college or the district should find it necessary to cancel/postpone commencement? Who would make that decision? How would it be handled? ***Again, the college president would make that decision in consultation with the chancellor's office and the department of risk management. The district must be consistent when making these types of decisions. Announcements would be made using email, the college/district website, faculty members (to their classes) and door postings.***
- What types of measures are being taken in centers that deal specifically with young children? ***The child care centers are following Dallas County Health Department recommendations.***

#### **Employee related Q & A:**

- What should employees do if they are sick? ***Stay home and see their doctor if needed.***
- How long can you require an employee who is sick to stay home? ***You can require an employee who has H1N1 to stay home as long as necessary to recover. Currently, the CDC recommends that those with flu-like illness should stay home for at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever, or signs of a fever, without the use of fever-reducing medicines. They should stay home even if they are using antiviral drugs.***
- Can employees refuse to come to work or to attend a meeting, which is business-related, when they think they may come in contact with someone who has been exposed to or who actually has H1N1 influenza? ***Yes, if an employee has a reasonable belief concerning her or his safety or health in a situation. Reasonable belief must be based on facts rather than speculation. A runny nose and watery eyes are not signs of H1N1.***
- Can employees telecommute if they are ill or if their colleagues are ill with H1N1 influenza and they do not wish to come to the office environment? ***Yes, they may telecommute if there is a specific confirmed medical need, which is deemed an emergency under the telecommuting policy and is approved by the employee's supervisor.***
- Does the district have to supply special equipment or supplies that protect employees from H1N1 influenza while they are at work? ***No. Currently, the prescription for prevention is to wash hands thoroughly and regularly, avoid physical contact and cover your mouth when coughing or sneezing. Campuses have or will have hand sanitizing dispensers and will place them in high traffic areas. Employees are welcome to bring their own. Other personal protective equipment is not required, and the colleges/locations have no obligation to provide it.***

- What should employees do if they don't have alternative day care? ***An employee who needs to stay home to take care of a sick child or to be at home because the child's school is closed can use up to 12 days of sick leave per year related to a child's illness.***
- What happens if an employee has used her or his 12 days of sick leave dependent leave for the year and the child's school is closed? ***The employee will be granted an exception to use her or his own sick leave.***
- If a child's school is closed, can an employee bring her or his child to work? ***No. If a mandatory school closure occurs, the employee may not bring her or his child to work, based on the district's Visitors at Work Policy.***
- If a mandatory DCCCD location closure occurs due to the H1N1 influenza, will employees be required to take personal leave? ***No. If DCCCD mandates a location closing, employees are not required to use their leave.***
- If an employee believes he or she has H1N1 influenza symptoms, goes to the doctor and then learns that he or she does not have H1N1 influenza, does that employee use sick leave for that time away from work? ***Yes.***
- If an employee stays home or is asked to stay home because she or he has H1N1 influenza symptoms, will that employee be required to use sick leave? ***Yes, the employee will be required to use sick leave, just like any other illness. Other options are available if the employee has exhausted all of her or his sick leave, vacation and extenuating circumstance leave. The employee may be eligible for the sick leave pool, Family Medical Leave and/or short-term disability.***