



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

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Influenza (also known as the flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by flu viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. The flu is different from a cold or allergies. The flu usually comes on suddenly. Because colds/allergies and flu share many symptoms, it can be difficult (or even impossible) to tell the difference between them based on symptoms alone. Special tests that usually must be done within the first few days of illness can tell if a person has the flu.

Categories of Q & A:

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General Q & A:

- Does the Dallas County Community College District have a plan in place to deal with an outbreak of the Flu? *DCCCD has an emergency operations plan that was developed by the district's department of emergency management. The plan is designed to adapt to specific situations or circumstances like the influenza (Flu).*
- Under what conditions would a location or a facility close because of an outbreak of influenza (Flu)? *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.*
- What would be the basis/rationale for closing a DCCCD location/facility because of an outbreak of influenza (Flu)? *Dallas County Health and Human Services is not currently recommending that locations close due to any public health issues.*
- Who makes the decision to close a location or facility because of a reported/probable/confirmed case of the Flu? *The college/location president would make the decision to close a facility, in consultation with the chancellor's office, the department of emergency management and Dallas County Health and Human Services.*
- May an event be canceled because of an outbreak of the Flu? Who makes that decision and how should the decision be communicated (and by whom)? *Yes, an event could be canceled because of an outbreak of the Flu. Currently, Dallas County Health and Human Services does not recommend canceling events due to the Flu. Instead, the department recommends that everyone follow good health practices such as the regular washing of hands. The college president would make that decision, in consultation with the chancellor's office and the department of emergency 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 website and social media. Another option is using the District's notification system "DCCCD Alerts" which uses e-mails, text messages, and voice messages. Messages are sent to e-mails and phone numbers provided 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 a Flu situation? How often? How much? Who will provide it? *The district's department of emergency 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 Flu procedures and decision-making processes? *The following teams are collaborating to provide information to the district about Flu procedures and decision-making processes: legal counsel, emergency management, 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 at our colleges, 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.*
- Where can students, faculty, staff and administrators go for more information about Flu? **DCHHS Website** <http://www.dallascounty.org/hhs/> or **CDC Website** <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/>

- Who and how are we working with other agencies in Dallas County to handle the Flu situation? *Staff members in DCCCD emergency management are collaborating with Dallas County Health and Human Services, Dallas County Emergency Management, State of Texas Emergency Management, the Texas Department of Health, and the Texas Higher Education Emergency Management Council.*
- How long will this Flu situation continue? Who determines when it is over? *The length of the Flu situation is unknown. Dallas County Health and Human Services may provide information concerning when the Flu situation is considered finished.*
- Who do I call for help related to District issues? *Feel free to call the district's emergency management department 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 Flu? *Yes. Regardless of illness, no one should come to class when they could potentially infect others. However, keep in mind that some of the signs and symptoms of Flu are similar to colds or allergies. 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 may be reconsidered 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. Regardless of illness, no one should come to class when they could potentially infect others. However, keep in mind that some of the signs and symptoms of Flu are similar to colds or allergies. 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 may be reconsidered for a student organization.*
- May a nurse tell a student that she or he must leave campus and/or see a doctor? *Yes. Regardless of illness, no one should come to class when they could potentially infect others. However, keep in mind that some of the signs and symptoms of Flu are similar to colds or allergies. 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 may be reconsidered 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 emergency management. The district must be consistent when making these types of decisions. Announcements would be made using e-mail, 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 and CDC 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 any illness to stay home as long as necessary to recover. For the Flu, the CDC advises CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or other necessities. Your fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine, such as Tylenol®.***
- 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 Ebola? ***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 the Flu.***
- Can employees telecommute if they are ill or if their colleagues are ill and they do not wish to come to the office environment? ***Yes, they may telecommute if a specific confirmed medical need exists; which is deemed an emergency under the telecommuting policy; and which is approved by the employee's supervisor.***
- Does the district have to supply special equipment or supplies that protect regular employees (with no health care responsibilities) while they are at work? ***No. Currently, the prescription for prevention is to wash hands thoroughly and regularly, and to avoid physical contact. Colleges 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 may 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 a public health issue, 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 Flu symptoms, goes to a health care provider and then learns that he or she does not have Flu, 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 an illness or signs and/or symptoms of an illness, 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.***