

The FISCAL REPORT *an informational update*

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Update on Procedures and Policies Regarding the H1N1 Virus

On May 1, 2009, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Jack O'Connell, held a conference call with Dr. Bonita Sorensen, Chief Deputy Director of the California Department of Public Health; Sue Burr, the Executive Director of the California County Superintendents Educational Services Association; and California Department of Education (CDE) staff to discuss procedures that should be followed to prevent the spread of the H1N1 virus and school closure policies following the confirmed diagnosis of the H1N1 virus among students or school staff. New information was released regarding several of these issues.

- When a confirmed case of the H1N1 virus is found in a child, the local county public health agency will contact the county office of education (COE) in which that child attends school to order a dismissal of students from that school. This is an important distinction from a school closure, because in a situation where students are dismissed, school staff are still required to report to their site; the school is not closed.
- Information regarding potential cases of the H1N1 virus should be reported to the local county public health agencies. Districts should direct parents of children with suspected or confirmed cases of the H1N1 virus to work with their healthcare provider to inform the local county public health agency if they haven't already done so.
- According to the May 1, 2009, Center for Disease Control's (CDC's) [Update on School \(K - 12\) Dismissal and Childcare Facilities: Interim CDC Guidance in Response to Human Infections with the 2009 Influenza A H1N1 Virus](#), "If a school dismisses students or a childcare facility closes, schools and childcare facilities should dismiss students for a **minimum of 14 days**. Schools, in consultation with local and state public health officials, should evaluate daily the need for possible extension of the dismissal/closure based on local influenza surveillance information, and the occurrence of new infections and severity of illness in the community from this virus. This length of time is recommended because children are likely to be infectious for about 7 - 10 days after the onset of illness."
- If a district has dismissed students, educational services should still be provided to these students in the form of web-based lessons or distance-learning situations where packets of materials can be distributed to students through arranged parent-pickups at the school site, or another nearby location. Though special funding has not been identified for the additional costs that maybe incurred for these services,

- it is important to track any added expenses during this time, in the event that funding is allocated at a later date.
- Superintendent O'Connell has been in communication with the federal and state governments requesting that he be authorized to hold and release the dates for the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) and California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) exams. Current guidance from Superintendent O'Connell and the CDE indicate that, if your district is scheduled to hold these exams, it should proceed as planned in all open schools.
 - COEs are providing updated information on their websites regarding school closures, identified cases of the H1N1 virus, and policies and procedures for school districts to follow. School districts should visit the website and stay in contact with their local COEs.
 - It is important that school districts and county offices stay in constant contact with local county public health agencies and follow the county public health agency recommendations.

Please visit the CDC's website at http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/k12_dismissal.htm for more information on the H1N1 virus student dismissal guidelines.

-Kathleen O'Sullivan, Maureen Evans, and Suzanne Speck

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