

Harris County

HCPHES

Public Health & Environmental Services

**Considerations for Revising Policies Regarding
Infection Control and Absenteeism in School Settings
for Highly Infectious Respiratory Infection Events**
April 28, 2009

- Consider implementing policies and procedures that can limit the spread of influenza at school
 - Promote heightened hand hygiene and cough etiquette among students and staff
 - Ensure appropriate supplies are available – soap, tissues, hand sanitizer, waste baskets, etc.
 - Limit face-to-face and other direct contact, when possible.

 - Establish special policies and procedures regarding absenteeism that may be unique to a outbreak or pandemic situation
 - Establish non-punitive absenteeism policies for students, including suspending policies that penalize students for excessive absenteeism as well as district programs regarding achieving perfect attendance
 - Relax and/or enhance sick leave and absenteeism policies for employees
 - Encourage home quarantine if a household member is ill; enable employees to use sick leave to care for an ill family member
 - Suspend requirements to provide a “doctor’s note” before absences are excused/approved
 - Ensure policies so that all employees, including those not eligible for Family and Medical Leave Act or paid sick leave, are provided job protection for time off due to illness or caring for ill family members

 - Establish special policies and procedures for staff and students suspected to be ill or who become ill at school
 - Review protocols for contacting family members, healthcare providers and local health department contacts.
 - Establish protocols for ensuring that staff and students with a known or suspected communicable disease not remain at school, and return only after symptoms resolve. Encourage staff and students to stay home when they are ill. Employees and students who become ill with influenza-like illness (fever plus cough and/or sore throat) should stay home and not return to school for seven days after the onset of illness or at least 24 hours after symptoms are gone, whichever is longer.
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