

Talking Points for School Superintendents About Seasonal and Pandemic Flu



**VALUE
HEALTH**
PROTECT AGAINST
INFLUENZA

Use these talking points when addressing teachers, principals, and other school staff about flu and other health issues.

- Seasonal flu is serious but it is also preventable.
- The best way to prevent flu is to get vaccinated. (*insert information about local flu vaccine availability as appropriate*)
- There has been a great deal of talk over the past year about the possibility of a flu pandemic — a severe global outbreak of a strain of flu for which there is not a vaccine. The strain that is getting the most attention nationwide is commonly referred to as bird flu or avian flu. Its technical name is H5N1.
- There have been no reported cases of bird flu in either fowl or humans in the United States as of November 2006.
- No one knows if this virus will mutate to the point where it can easily infect humans and therefore become a pandemic.
- H5N1 mainly affects birds and poultry and is not easily spread from person to person.
- Virginia has taken the precaution of creating a statewide plan that would go into effect if the H5N1 strain of flu appears in the United States.
- This plan will guide decisions about canceling school and taking other precautions as necessary.
- It is highly unlikely but possible that a school may be closed in the event of a severe outbreak of seasonal flu.
- At this time there is no reason to be concerned that flu or flu-like symptoms in yourself or any of your students or staff are related to a pandemic flu strain.
- The Virginia Department of Health may ask the school to report absences related to regular, seasonal flu. This request also should not cause alarm about the possibility of pandemic flu. Reporting on seasonal flu is important in helping health officials understand its impact on the community.
- Many of the precautions the Virginia Department of Health is recommending that we take to prevent seasonal flu will also be recommended should a pandemic flu outbreak occur.
- Make sure that your restrooms are as inviting as possible and that soap and paper towels are always available.
- Encourage classes to take regular breaks throughout the day to make time for students and teachers to wash their hands.
- Make sure tissues are available in the classroom, the cafeteria, the bus, and other appropriate spots where students gather.
- If you think you might have the flu, stay home from work and/or school.