

IMPORTANT MESSAGE – PLEASE READ

October 20, 2009

As you may know flu is spreading easily from person to person and school-age children are among the groups most affected. We are taking steps to prevent the spread of flu at Holton Public Schools. Currently, flu conditions in Muskegon County have become more severe. We want to keep the school open and functioning as normal for as long as possible. **We need your help to do this.** We are working closely with the Muskegon County Health Department (MCHD) to monitor the H1N1 situation locally and make decisions about the best steps to take.

H1N1 is a virus similar to other forms of type A influenza viruses. H1N1 is contagious from person-to-person through coughing or sneezing of people infected with the virus. Its symptoms include fever, lethargy, lack of appetite, and coughing. Some people with H1N1 have also reported runny nose, sore throat, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. The H1N1 virus responds to two prescription antiviral medications, oseltamivir (Tamiflu) and zanamivir (Relenza), which can make the illness less severe and speed recovery.

As a district we continually monitor the following sites: Center for Disease Control, Michigan Department of Community Health, and the Muskegon County Health Department for up to date information regarding the impact of H1N1. We will do our best to keep you informed of the recommendations regarding the procedures we are implementing at our schools. We will continue to have updates on the homepage of our website at <http://www.holtonschools.com/>

At present, we are asking parents to follow these recommendations:

- Stay home if you are sick with flu-like symptoms. Seek medical attention for yourself or your child if the symptoms listed above are present.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after your cough or sneeze.
- Alcohol-based hand cleansers are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs are spread that way.
- Practice other good, preventive health habits such as getting plenty of sleep, being physically active, managing your stress, drinking plenty of fluids and eating nutritious food.

Here are a few things you can do to help since flu conditions are now more severe.

- **Teach your children to wash their hands** often with soap and water. You can set a good example by doing this yourself.
- **Teach your children not to share personal items** like drinks, food or unwashed utensils, and to cover their coughs and sneezes with tissues. If they don't have a tissue, they should cough or sneeze into their upper sleeve, not their hands.
- **Know the signs and symptoms of the flu.** Symptoms of the flu include fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit, 37.8 degrees Celsius or greater), cough, sore throat, a runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, and feeling very tired. Some people may also vomit or have diarrhea.
- **Don't send children to school if they are sick.** Any children who are sick at school *will be sent home*. Staying home when sick will allow your children to rest and allows you to monitor their health closely.
- **If a household member is sick, keep any school-aged brothers or sisters home for 5 days** from the time the household member became sick. Parents should monitor their health and the health of other school-aged children for fever and other symptoms of the flu.

Further information regarding H1N1 is available from your medical provider, the Muskegon County Health Department (www.muskegonhealth.net), the Michigan Department of Community Health (<http://www.michigan.gov/mdch>) or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov). We will notify you of any other changes to the district's strategy to prevent the spread of the flu.

Sincerely,

Ann M. Cardon
Superintendent of Holton Public Schools