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September 2, 2009

Dear Parents and Guardians:

We understand that many people are concerned about the novel H1N1 (swine flu) virus outbreak. This is a new strain of flu virus for which there is no built-up immunity in the population. Illness has ranged from mild to severe. As we approach flu season, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is concerned that a significant percentage of the population could be sickened by H1N1. Students are among those at highest risk of getting sick from the virus.

Fortunately, the traditional flu/respiratory illness preventive measures continue to be effective in slowing the spread of the virus. These measures include:

- washing your hands frequently
- covering your coughs and sneezes
- avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth
- avoid sharing utensils and drinks
- *staying home from school (or work) if you are sick*
- staying away from sick people

An additional protective measure is to get a seasonal flu shot. Although the seasonal flu shot does NOT protect you from novel H1N1, it may help keep you healthier and reduce visits to the doctor or hospital.

An H1N1 vaccine is currently being tested to ensure that it is safe and effective. The CDC anticipates that it will be ready for distribution in October.

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At this time, the CDC has included **children 6 months to 18 years of age** among the target populations who should receive the new H1N1 vaccine when it becomes available. *Please keep in mind that CDC guidance is subject to change.*

The Atlantic County Division of Public Health is working closely with schools on novel H1N1 preparedness planning. Such plans include educating children on the above protective measures, providing reinforcement by serving as good role models and sending and keeping children home if they have flu like symptoms (fever and cough, sore throat, etc.)

Additionally, you are encouraged to have personal child care plans in place in the event that children or caregivers become ill.

Please be assured that while novel H1N1 is cause for concern, at this point, there is no cause for alarm. We have attached some H1N1 flu information for you and your family. After you read it, you may want to discuss it with your family doctor or pediatrician.

For updated information, please visit our web site at www.aclink.org/publichealth or www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/parents/ for special information for parents. As more information becomes available regarding the vaccine, we will keep you informed.

If you have any questions, please call the Atlantic County Division of Public Health at (609) 645-5853.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



Patricia Diamond,
Health Officer/Director

Attachment

c: Thomas J. Dowd, Executive County Superintendent of Schools
Joia Di Stefano, Director of Health Planning and Education