Media Resources
SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE A:
Health Services will use this type of news release to announce schools remain open

For release (DATE) Contact: (PIO name and number)

Parents should be prepared for possibility of school closing due to pandemic

(School District #) schools remain open despite the pandemic flu outbreak in the county but parents are asked to prepare for possible closures if the virus continues to spread.

School and county health officials are working together to monitor the situation and parents will be updated with any important information.

“At this time, we believe students can safely attend classes, and schools will remain open. Our thoughts are with all of our families and children who are affected,” said (health official)

If the pandemic flu continues to spread and more students become ill, health officials say they may need to order schools closed for a period of time. They urge parents to begin planning now for childcare in their home.

Health officials say parents can help protect their children and prevent the spread of pandemic flu as they would colds and seasonal flu by taking the following precautions:

- Teach your children to wash hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds. Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
- Teach your children to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or by coughing into the inside of the elbow. Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
- Teach your children to stay at least three feet from people who are sick. People who are sick should stay home from work or school and avoid other people until they are better.

Health officials point out that recommendations may change during the course of a pandemic flu outbreak. For school updates, parents can call the school district’s hotline at (INSERT HOTLINE NUMBER or the local county number) For more information on pandemic flu, visit (state or local health department) Web site at (insert URL) or the Department of Health and Human Services pandemic influenza Web site at www.pandemicflu.gov.
SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE B:
Health Services will use this type of press release to announce school closures
A similar press release will be issued when school reopens

For immediate release (DATE) Contact: (PIO name and number)

Health officials order closure of schools in (School District #)

(Local) County health officials have ordered the closure of schools as a result of the pandemic flu outbreak in the county.

Schools may be closed for a period of time - days or even weeks. Because the virus is easily spread from person-to-person, (Local County health department) has also ordered colleges, day care centers and preschools to close. Because it is unsafe for large groups of people to gather, health officials warn people to stay away from shopping malls, community centers and other places where germs can be spread.

"We know this is an anxious time for our community and our hearts go out to those who are ill. We are working closely with the schools to deal with the situation and will keep parents updated with any important information," said (Local Health Official)

According to LOCAL HEALTH OFFICIAL, the purpose of closing schools is to limit contact among children to decrease their risk of getting sick and to limit the spread of infection.

Because so many people are sick with the flu, health officials acknowledge that it may be hard to get a doctor's appointment, go to a clinic or even be seen in a hospital emergency room. They provided some tips for residents to care for the sick at home:

- Have them drink plenty of liquids (juice, water)
- Keep the sick person as comfortable as possible. Rest is important.
- For adults with fever, sore throat and muscle aches, use ibuprofen (Motrin) or acetaminophen (Tylenol). Do not use aspirin in children or teenagers; it can cause Reye's syndrome, a life-threatening illness.
- Keep tissues and a trash bag within reach of the sick person.
- Be sure everyone in your home washes his or her hands frequently.
- Keep the people who are sick with the flu away from the people who are not sick.

For school updates, parents can call the school district's hotline at (INSERT HOTLINE NUMBER).

For more information on pandemic flu, visit (state or local health department) Web site at (insert URL) or the Department of Health and Human Services Web site at www.pandemicflu.gov.
SAMPLE KEY MESSAGES FOR SCHOOL OFFICIALS A- OUTBREAK

• We know this is an anxious time for our community and our hearts go out to those who are ill. We are working closely with local health officials to deal with the situation and will keep parents updated with any important information.

• At this time, under the guidance of the county health department, we believe students can safely attend classes and schools will remain open. Our thoughts are with all of our families and children who are affected.

• If pandemic flu continues to spread and more students become ill, health officials may need to close schools for an extended period of time (for example, up to 6 weeks).

• The purpose of closing schools will be to decrease contact among children in order to decrease their risk of getting sick and to limit the spread of infection. If schools are closed, children should stay at home.

• We urge parents to plan now for the possibility of schools closing. Arrange day care, and home schooling.

• Parents can help protect their children and prevent the spread of pandemic flu as they would colds and other flu by taking the following precautions:

  ➢ Teach your children to wash hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds. Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
  ➢ Teach your children to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or by coughing into the inside of the elbow.
  ➢ Teach your children to stay away from people who are sick and stay home from work or school if you are sick.

• Recommendations may change during the course of a flu pandemic. We will make public announcements through the media and parents can call the school district’s hotline at (INSERT HOTLINE NUMBER).

• For more information on pandemic flu and prevention, visit (local or state department of health website with URL) or call the Health Emergency Information Line: 1-###-####-####. Information may also be found at the Department of Health and Human Services pandemic influenza Web site: www.pandemicflu.gov
SAMPLE KEY MESSAGES FOR SCHOOL OFFICIALS B-SCHOOL CLOSURES

• (Local County) health officials have ordered the closure of schools as a result of the pandemic flu outbreak in our county.

• Schools may be closed for an extended period of time (for example, up to 6 weeks).

• We know this is a difficult time for our community, and our hearts go out to those who are ill. We are working closely with health officials to deal with the situation and will keep parents updated with any important information.

• Because pandemic flu is easily spread from person-to-person, it is unsafe for large groups of people to gather and children should stay home. The purpose of closing schools is to decrease contact among children in order to decrease their risk of getting sick and to limit the spread of infection.

• During this time, children and adults should stay away from other people and groups, as much as possible. Health officials also advise that people should not gather in other locations such as homes, shopping malls, movie theaters or community centers.

• Parents can help protect their children and prevent the spread of pandemic flu as they would colds and other flu by taking the following precautions:
  ➢ Teach your children to wash hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds. Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
  ➢ Teach your children to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or by coughing into the inside of the elbow.
  ➢ Teach your children to stay at least three feet from people who are sick and stay home from work or school if you are sick.

• Recommendations may change during the course of a flu pandemic. We will make public announcements through the media and parents can call the school district's hotline at (INSERT HOTLINE NUMBER)

For more information on pandemic flu and prevention, visit (local or state department of health website with URL) or call the Health Emergency Information Line: 1-####-####-####-. Information may also be found at the Department of Health and Human Services pandemic influenza Web site: www.pandemicflu.gov
Low-income students who depend on school served meals

- Consider providing alternative resources for low-income families to get food and other household supplies during a flu pandemic.

Students with chronic illness and/or disability

- Emergency Contact – regularly update emergency contact information for students with pre-existing health conditions.
- Medical Information – information about a student’s medication(s), dosage instructions, and contact information for his/her primary health care physician.

Students and families who do not speak English as their second language

- Take a survey of the different languages spoken by students at each school.
- If possible, have translators translate the school or district’s pandemic influenza preparedness plan.
- Internet resources for pandemic influenza related information available in different languages are available for download online:
  - Cover Your Cough, from CDC: [www.CDC.gov/flu/protect/covercough.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/covercough.htm)
  - National Defense University, Center for Technology and National Security Policy, Bird Flu and You posters: [www.ndu.edu/ctnsp/Bird_flu.htm](http://www.ndu.edu/ctnsp/Bird_flu.htm)
  - US Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Avian flu information in different languages: [www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/)
  - Wash Your Hands to Stop Germs and Stay Healthy poster, available in English and Spanish: [www.co.shawnee ks.us/ha/ep/SG.shtm](http://www.co.shawnee ks.us/ha/ep/SG.shtm)

Sources: Adapted from Washington County Department of Health and Human Services, Washington County, Oregon.
Pandemic Flu and You – How to Protect Students and Teachers

Follow these simple steps:

- Encourage teachers and staff to wash their hands using soap and water before eating and after using the toilet. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub. Keep alcohol-based rub out of reach of children.

- Encourage students to wash their hands before eating and after using the toilet.

- Teach students to wash their hands for 20 seconds, long enough to sing “Happy Birthday” twice.

- Ensure that sink locations and restrooms are stocked with soap and paper towels or working hand dryer.

- Encourage students, staff and teachers to use paper towel to open restroom doors after washing their hands. Place a garbage can inside each restroom close to the entrance to facilitate ease of paper towel disposal.

- Clean frequently touched surfaces and shared items daily using an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) – registered disinfectant labeled for activity against bacteria and viruses, an EPA-registered chlorine bleach/hypochlorite solution. Follow instruction labels for use. Keep disinfectants out of reach of children.

- Encourage parents of sick students to keep their children home to prevent the spread of disease at school.

- Encourage sick staff and teachers to stay home. Establish non-punitive sick leave policies during a pandemic.

- Encourage staff and teachers to cover their coughs and sneezes using tissue or shirt sleeves, not their hands.

- Teach students to cover their coughs and sneezes and have teachers encourage this behavior in classrooms.

- Educate parents about respiratory etiquette and hand washing at home and their importance in disease prevention. Encourage parents to model the desired behavior for their children.

Sources: Adapted from CDC, Preventing the Spread of Influenza (the Flu) in Child Care Settings: Guidance for Administrators, Care Providers, and Other Staff, February 25, 2004, and the Washington County Department of Health and Human Services, Washington County, Oregon.
Educational resources are available online:

- "Scrub Club" is an educational website offered by the National Science Foundation that teaches children about hygiene practices: www.scrubclub.org/home.php?fuseaction=main

- "It's a Snap" offers free educational materials on how to make hand washing an integral part of the school day: www.itsasnap.org/index.asp

- "Germ Stopper", hand washing and respiratory etiquette materials in several different languages developed by the CDC: www.cdc.gov/germstopper

- "Glo Germ", a tool to demonstrate hand washing, surface cleaning, hygiene, and containment techniques: www.glogerm.com