



State of Arizona
Department of Education

Tom Horne
Superintendent of
Public Instruction

MEMORANDUM

Date: July 31, 2009

To: Superintendents and Charter Administrators

From: Cheryl J Lebo, Associate Superintendent
Standards and Assessment Division

Jean Ajamie, Director
School Safety and Prevention

Will Humble, Interim Director
Arizona Department of Health Services

Subject: Guidance to Schools on Pandemic Preparedness

The new H1N1 influenza strain outbreak was officially declared a pandemic in June 2009. Although the virus is currently no more virulent than seasonal influenza, a larger wave of infection is expected to occur as early as August when students arrive back to school, or as late as December. This larger wave is expected to result in more illness and death. It is therefore imperative to ensure plans are in place. Public health authorities in Arizona are committed to keeping schools open but planning needs to include preparations for large numbers of ill students and staff. As this situation continues to evolve, contact with your county/tribal health authority is necessary for obtaining the most accurate and timely information.

Brief guidance clarifying the recommendations for schools was emailed to Superintendents and Charter Administrators in May 2009. Enclosed is more thorough guidance on preparing for pandemics and similar public health emergencies. The top three lessons learned from schools that successfully closed last school year because of the new H1N1 influenza strain are:

1. Have your emergency response team formed and lines of authority and responsibilities delineated;
2. Be in contact with your county/tribal health department; and
3. Have a plan for communication with families and the media.

School Safety and Prevention and the Arizona Department of Health Services are sponsoring a conference on emergency preparedness and other school safety issues in September. More information will be sent in August. Thank you for your attention to this situation last spring and for your continued attention in caring for our youth.