

WESTHILL CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

CAROL A. ILACQUA, Ed.D.
*Assistant Superintendent for
Instructional Services*
Phone (315) 426-3215

STEPHEN A. BOCCOLATT
Superintendent of Schools
400 Walberta Road
Syracuse, New York 13219-2214
Phone (315) 426-3218
Fax (315) 488-6411

MARILEE P. HILL
*Assistant Superintendent for
Business Administration*
Phone (315) 426-3210

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Dear Parent/Guardian:

As you know, earlier this year, we experienced H1N1 influenza (swine flu) in Onondaga County. While it is difficult to predict what will happen this fall, we need to be prepared for this new flu virus in our community again this flu season. Fortunately, our experiences these past few months have allowed us to be better prepared if it does return.

Westhill and other Central New York school districts have worked together with the Onondaga County Health Department to provide you with information that can help you and your child be prepared if H1N1 virus does show up in our community again.

Guidelines to decrease the chance of getting influenza:

- **Vaccination if available:** The single best way to protect yourself and your children from the flu is to get a flu shot. If a flu shot becomes available for this new virus, please contact your health care provider. It is possible that H1N1 vaccinations will be provided at some school sites. More information will be made available if that is the case.
- **Hand washing:** This is a great time to help your children understand how important it is to wash hands to decrease the risk of getting sick.

Guidelines to decrease the spread of influenza in the community:

- **Stay home when sick:** People with flu-like illness (fever of more than 100° F with cough or unexplained sore throat) should stay home for at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever without the use of fever-reducing drugs like Tylenol or Motrin. They should stay home even if they are using antiviral drugs.
- **Cover your cough and sneeze:** This is a great time to remind children how to cover their nose and mouth if they cough or sneeze so that they are not spreading their germs.
- **Separate ill students and staff:** Students and staff who appear to have flu-like symptoms will be placed in a room separate from others until they can go home. A surgical mask will be provided if available.
- **Routine cleaning:** School staff will routinely clean areas that students and staff touch often with cleaners they typically use.
- **Early treatment of high-risk students and staff:** People who are at high risk for influenza complications and who become ill with influenza-like illness should speak with their health care providers as soon as possible. People at risk include those who are pregnant, have asthma or diabetes, have compromised immune systems, or have neuromuscular diseases.
- **Consideration of selective school dismissal:** At this time, we do NOT expect to need to dismiss students but if the virus changes, parents need to be patient as we work with the Health Department to make sure that we are doing everything we can to protect the health of our children.

Planning Tips for Parents to Prepare:

- Develop a plan if your child becomes sick and needs to stay home for 3 to 5 days with flu.
- Make sure that our school has all the current contact and emergency contact information necessary for your child.
- Talk to your child about the flu to decrease fear and misinformation.
- Consider contacting your health care provider to schedule your children's regular flu shots as soon as possible.
- If you do not have a health care provider, take this time to learn about public health clinics and other resources that are available in Onondaga County.
- If you do not have health insurance for your children and are interested in learning more about public health insurance, call Child Health Plus at (315) 435-6808 for more information. There are some eligibility rules. Child Health Plus is New York's comprehensive health care program for families who are income eligible.

We are committed to providing information to all parents and guardians as quickly as possible and will be working closely with other school districts and with the Onondaga County Health Department to ensure that you get timely and accurate information. Information will be posted on our website as it becomes available.

Sincerely,

Stephen A. Bocciolatt
Superintendent of Schools

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400 Walberta Road
Syracuse, NY 13219-2297

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