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Influenza H1N1 Information for Parents

By Claudia Rampley, Central Office

Influenza H1N1 is a new virus that includes genetic matter from pigs, birds and humans. In June, the World Health Organization declared H1N1 a pandemic because of the number of cases across the world. Because this virus is new, we do not know how it will behave in the winter. Therefore, it is important for parents to be prepared for any scenario. Also, a vaccine is now available for this new type of flu. Contact your child's health care provider for advice about your child receiving this vaccine.

Symptoms

The symptoms of influenza, including H1N1, can include:

- Fever*
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny nose
- Diarrhea and vomiting (occasionally)
- Headache
- Chills
- Fatigue
- Body aches

(*It is important to note that not everyone with influenza H1N1 will have a fever. The percentage of people who have laboratory-confirmed H1N1 and do not have a fever ranges from about 10 percent to 50 percent.)

In general, the incubation period for influenza is estimated to range from one to four days with an average of two days. Influenza virus shedding (the time during which a person might be infectious to others) begins the day before illness onset and can persist for five to seven days, although some might shed the virus for longer periods (particularly young children and people with weakened immune systems).

Just like the seasonal flu, most people who get H1N1 will recover without needing medical treatment. However, like the seasonal flu, H1N1 can lead to severe illness or death in some cases. People with the following conditions are among the most susceptible:

- Pregnancy
- Diabetes
- Kidney disease
- Neurological disorders
- Weakened immune system
- Asthma or other chronic lung problems
- Heart disease
- Liver disease
- Neuromuscular disorders

Anyone with a risk factor should seek medical advice at the onset of symptoms. Antiviral medication may be prescribed.

Prevention

To prevent the spread of the germs that cause H1N1, use the following tips:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water. Use sanitizing hand gel if soap and water are not readily available.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or the inside of your elbow, not your bare hands.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Monitor your school-age children for illness every morning. Keep your child home if he or she is sick. If your child is suspected of having the H1N1 flu, he or she should remain home until symptom-free without fever-reducing medication for 24 hours. This will help prevent spreading the flu to others.
- Students who are sick should not be sent to group day care and should not be out in public places except to receive medical care. Individuals who might be ill with H1N1 should not be at school or work; and they should not go to the mall, attend sporting events, eat at restaurants or participate in social events while they are sick.
- Anyone in the household who has flulike symptoms should be isolated in a separate room, and only one person should have contact with the individual who is sick. The sick person and the caregiver ➔

should avoid close contact and wear face masks if possible. The sick person's laundry and eating utensils should be handled carefully and washed thoroughly before reuse.

- Household cleaning and disinfecting can help prevent transmission of the flu virus. Studies have shown that the virus can live on a surface and can make a person sick for up to eight hours. To prevent transmission, all hard surfaces (door knobs, refrigerator door handles, telephones, faucet handles, countertops, bathroom surfaces, etc.) should be cleaned and disinfected frequently.

Plan now for how you will care for your child if he or she is home sick, or if the school should need to close due to a large number of absences. It is important that you keep the school informed if your child becomes ill with flulike symptoms, and be sure the school has your most current contact information.

For more information

Frequent updates are available online regarding the seasonal flu and H1N1.

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu>
- Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS): http://www.dhss.mo.gov/BT_Response/_H1N1Flu.html
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS): <http://www.flu.gov>

Missouri residents can also call 1-877-FLU-4141 (1-877-358-4141) for information about the H1N1 flu. Sponsored by DHSS, this toll-free number provides assistance ranging from symptoms and basic medical advice to the availability of the new H1N1 vaccine. The number is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Parent Focus

November 2009

Missouri Schools for the Severely Disabled
P.O. Box 480
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**Charlie Taylor,
Superintendent**



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Information concerning other available resources, programs, etc., is not to be construed as an endorsement by Missouri Schools for the Severely Disabled for any specific product, organization, or philosophy.

MSSD Student Wins Poster Contest

Dedire Maple, a student at Mississippi Valley, recently participated in the annual Missouri Association for Pupil Transportation (MAPT) poster contest and was named the first-place winner in the special education category.

Dedire has participated in the contest for several years. Her poster was submitted to the national contest held in October by the National Association for Pupil Transportation. Congratulations to Dedire on her achievement!



Dedire Maple's poster won first place in the annual MAPT poster contest in the special education category.

MSSD Services for Students 21 Years of Age

By Charlie Taylor, MSSD Superintendent

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education recently implemented a new policy pertaining to when educational services will end for students. Starting with the 2010-2011 school year, Missouri Schools for the Severely Disabled will no longer provide educational services to students beyond their 21st birthday. This change will not affect students turning 21 during this school year. Students who turn 21 prior to the last day of the 2009-2010 extended school year (ESY) session will continue to have the option of attending school through the end of ESY. This change was implemented due to a decline in state revenue. Educational services are not required to be provided for students beyond their 21st birthday.

Please keep this change in mind as you plan for the future. Your child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) team will be working with you to plan for this change and to ensure that all possible steps are taken to smoothly transition your child from our school program to services available after graduation.



Helen's Haven



By Jennifer Burns, Home School Coordinator, Helen M. Davis

"Children need nature for the healthy development of their senses, and, therefore, for learning and creativity."
– from *"Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder"* by Richard Louv

This quote is the premise behind the outdoor classroom at Helen M. Davis and the reason why a barren schoolyard was transformed into an extraordinary garden for the senses.

The project started in early fall 2008 with about 15 dedicated staff members who signed on to the committee. They began brainstorming about what it would be like to have a garden in their own backyard. They had a vision of a garden for the five senses, an outdoor oasis to teach children responsibility and



good stewardship toward the earth. The garden would be an opportunity for children to have hands-on experience and a place for them to learn beyond the four walls of the classroom, complete with plants native to

Missouri, birdhouses, birdbaths and garden benches.

Committee members learned about an educational grant through the Missouri Department of Conservation and knew they had a strong group of individuals who were dedicated to work toward the qualifications for the grant. They began meeting on a regular basis and worked diligently on different aspects of the grant – creating a detailed site map of the garden, gathering support from the community, budgeting for the project and determining how the students at Helen M. Davis would benefit.



The committee met the grant's deadline; and in April, the school was awarded a \$1,000 grant for the project. It wasn't long before community members (like the Kiwanis of St. Joseph) stepped up to help staff, students and parents get started with the groundbreaking. Local businesses and individuals were willing to help out and provide donations for this



special project. It wasn't long until students were out planting and making the garden into a living reality.

How has this garden benefited the students at Helen M. Davis? The educational opportunities in Helen's Haven are limitless. Students have the opportunity to dig in the dirt and plant native plants, herbs, trees and a variety of annuals – all while learning more about nature. The flowers and plants were carefully selected to provide a variety of textures, colors and scents, bringing the senses alive and creating a calm and peaceful sanctuary. With flowers blooming and colors brimming, students get to reap the visual rewards of their planting (not to mention the butterflies, birds, bees, rabbits and squirrels that now inhabit the area).



Students are also taking on the responsibility for weeding, cleaning and filling the birdbaths, watering the plants, and filling the bird feeders. All students have the opportunity to utilize the outdoor classroom to the degree of their ability; the garden has raised garden beds to allow accessibility for children in wheelchairs.

Only recently was the name "Helen's Haven" decided upon. It was a very difficult decision, so the school made a contest out of it. All 11 classrooms came up with a potential name for the garden; and a two-week penny drive allowed students, staff, parents and friends of the school to vote for their favorite name. Helen's Haven won with \$147 worth of votes. All in all, more than \$250 was raised from the penny drive, which will allow the school to purchase instructional materials for the outdoor classroom. In Helen's Haven, every moment is a teachable moment!

Q&A CORNER

Q: *Why does the Bus Transportation Information form (7-760-686) ask for alternate drop-off information and individuals who are permitted to receive my child?*

A: This form is important for providing bus personnel and the school with alternate addresses where your child can be dropped off if you are unable to be home to meet the bus. You may enter several alternate addresses of family members or friends. If the names, addresses or phone numbers supplied on the form change during the year, please complete a new form so that the bus team knows where to take your child if you are not home. If you are delayed getting home in the afternoon, inform the school as soon as possible. Let the school know who is going to receive your child so that the bus can be rerouted to one of your alternate addresses.

Bus personnel are only permitted to release your child to those who are listed on the form as being permitted to receive the student. If someone who is not listed is going to receive your child, you must contact the school in order to allow the bus staff to release your child to that person. People unfamiliar to the bus staff will be asked for their identification.

Extreme care is given to releasing your child only to authorized individuals. There might be circumstances (possibly unknown to the school and/or bus personnel) that would make it unsafe for your child to be released to a person who is not authorized on the form and is unfamiliar to bus staff. If you or an authorized person is not home to receive your child, bus staff will retain your child on the bus. This extra measure is for the safety and protection of your child.



MISSOURI SCHOOLS FOR THE SEVERELY DISABLED
Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Web site: <http://dese.mo.gov/divspeced/stateschools>

NOTE: If you have items of interest for Parent Focus, please call (573) 751-0706 (Missouri Relay (800) 735-2966) or forward them to Debbie Stover, Missouri Schools for the Severely Disabled, P.O. Box 480, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0480; e-mail: debbie.stover@dese.mo.gov.