



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhise Sláinte
Health Service Executive



Guidance for residential educational institutions in preparing for and managing Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 (Swine Flu)

13th August 2009

Version 2.1

Boarding schools, secondary schools with hostels, residential summer schools, Gaeltachts, English language colleges and childcare residential units.

These recommendations are based on current information and are subject to change based on ongoing surveillance and continuous risk assessment.

Background

This document provides interim public health guidance for residential educational institutions on preparing for Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza. This guidance includes recommendations on hygiene measures that should be put in place now in order to prevent the spread of respiratory illness, and planning activities that should occur in preparation for the possibility of cases of Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 occurring in residential educational institutions.

Educational institutions play a critical role in protecting the health of their students, staff, and the community from contagious diseases such as Pandemic (H1N1) 2009. Children and young adults are very susceptible to getting this new virus and residential educational institutions may be locations where spread of this new virus can happen quickly. Residential educational institutions can help prevent the spread of Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 by implementing good health practices now and preparing for activities that need to occur in the event of cases of Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 occurring there.

Guidance

1. Guidance for infection control: preventing the spread of respiratory illness through knowledge of Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 and practice of good respiratory and hand hygiene.

Residential educational institutions and all accommodation used by the institution to house its students should:

- Display posters on:
 - a. What to do to prevent spread of respiratory illness
 - b. Respiratory Hygiene and Cough Etiquette
 - c. Hand hygiene

There are posters suited to different age groups available on www.hpsc.ie
- Provide information on the symptoms of Pandemic (H1N1) 2009, what to do in the event of a person presenting with influenza like symptoms, hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette available to all staff and students (see www.hpsc.ie). The residential educational institution should ensure that the information is age appropriate for the students.
- Promote good hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette to their staff and students.
- Provide adequate infection prevention supplies, namely soap and/or alcohol based hand rub, disposable hand towels, tissues and bins.
- Have environmental cleaning procedures to prevent the spread of respiratory illness including:
 - Ensure that adequate supplies of cleaning materials are readily available (or, if you contract others to provide cleaning services, check that they have contingency plans)
 - Ensure there are procedures for regular cleaning of hard surfaces
 - Ensure that hand hygiene facilities are adequate and working properly; if/when updating or repairing facilities, consider installing automatic or foot-operated taps, dryers and waste bins. Ensure that you have stocks of tissues, paper towels and soaps
 - Consider how you might use alcohol-based hand rub, for example at the entrances to rooms or sites without hand-washing facilities
 - Check that you have procedures for isolating and caring for a student who falls ill and for obtaining/administering relevant treatment
- Prevent children sharing wind instruments.

2. Guidance for communications and guardianship arrangements for students

- In the event of Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza cases occurring in an educational institution or advice for an educational institution to close on public health grounds it will be essential to have a communications plan which will include:
 - a. Contact details of the institution's governing body (who should have up to date information on Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 and recommended educational institution actions)
 - b. Contact details of the Department of Public Health in the region
 - c. Up to date contact details of the student's guardian
 - i. The educational institution should ensure that the identified guardian has provided current contact number and emergency contact number
 - ii. Some students may be wards of court where the state is acting in loco parentis in which case the allocated social worker's current contact number and emergency contact number should be available
 - d. **Boarding schools/Schools with hostels/Gaeltachts/Summer Colleges/English language colleges:** Check the guardianship arrangements for students who would not be able to return to their families in the event of closure of the educational institution; keep these up to date. The guardian may be someone in Ireland nominated by parents or may be the institution itself. The residential educational institution may wish to clearly indicate to parents and to guardians that in the event of a child or number of children becoming ill with Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 there is a possibility of students being excluded from the residential educational institution and that the parent/guardian must ensure they or their nominated guardian will be available to take care of the child.
 - e. **Childcare residential units:** Liaise with placing authorities on the needs of the children placed with you; agree how you will determine what would be in the best interests of the student if there is advice to close the residential educational institution. For children who are wards of court the allocated social worker must be consulted before any decision is made.
 - f. Estimate the number of students who will not be able to return home in the event of advice to close the institution. Make plans to accommodate these.

3. Guidance for preparing for actions required if the residential educational institution suspects a student/staff member to have Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza or if there is a cluster of students/staff with influenza like illness in the school.

Residential educational institutions need to be prepared to recognise and respond if a student/staff member develops symptoms consistent with Pandemic (H1N1) 2009. This may build on policies already in place to deal with sick students/staff.

- All staff (which depending on type of setting will include teachers, supervisors, nanna ti, carers, social care workers) should be able to recognise symptoms of Pandemic (H1N1) 2009. See www.hpsc.ie for most up to date list of symptoms of Pandemic (H1N1) 2009.
- In the event that a staff member thinks a student may have Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 there should be a procedure in place that will include isolating the student until their parent/guardian is contacted. The residential educational institution should also have prior permission from parents to enable urgent medical assessment of sick

students if parent is uncontactable. If the parent/guardian lives close by he/she should be advised to phone their GP/family doctor regarding advice and assessment prior to attending the surgery. If he/she does not live close by, the educational institution needs to proceed to contact a doctor as below.

- In the event that a student who may have flu due to Pandemic (H1N1) 2009, is not able to return to their parents or guardians, there should be a procedure in place for contacting the local GP/school doctor by phone for advice and assessment and accommodating and caring for the student in isolation from other students until he/she is assessed by the doctor.
- In the event that there is an unusual number of children presenting with influenza like illness there should be a policy for notifying the educational institution's principal/director who should contact the local Department of Public Health by phone for advice and assessment of the situation.
- Residential educational institutions should have clear policies on exclusion of staff and students with flu like illness.
- Educational institutions should remind parents and carers that children displaying flu like symptoms while at home (weekends and holidays) should stay at home and not return to the residential educational institution for seven days from onset of symptoms.

4. Guidance for preparing for actions required if there is a case of Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 in a residential educational institution

Residential educational institutions need to have an emergency plan in the event that the GP/family doctor diagnoses a student or staff member with Pandemic (H1N1) 2009.

These actions will change based on current information but residential educational institutions should be prepared to act on advice that may include:

- The ill person being advised to return to their home for seven days from onset of symptoms.

However it is recognised that some students may not be able to return to parents or guardians, so their educational institution might have to continue to accommodate them. The residential educational institution should develop:

- Plans for caring for students sick with Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 who cannot return home (see below).

5. Guidance for preparing for residential educational institution closures

While it is expected that most educational institutions will remain open, even if there are cases of Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 in the institution, in certain circumstances there may be advice to close on public health grounds or because of staff absenteeism. In some residential educational institutions complete closure may not be possible (for example where a student lives overseas and is unable to return home immediately). In certain settings (for example childcare residential settings) closure may not be in the best interest of the student.

Residential educational institutions must develop plans for partial and total closure.

- Each residential educational institution should have a governance structure for implementation of educational institution closures.
- Where advice is to close on public health grounds all students who can return home should do so.

- Plans for caring for students sick with Pandemic (H1N1) 2009, who cannot return home (see below).
- Plans for caring for well students who cannot return home.
- Educational institutions need to have business continuity plans in place to deal with educational institution closures due to public health recommendation or due to teacher absences. These should include:
 - a. Staff working arrangements in event of educational institution being closed
 - b. Communications with students when educational institution is closed
 - c. Criteria for lifting educational institution closure (in event of closure due to public health recommendation the local Department of Public Health will give advice on criteria for lifting educational institution closure)
 - d. Plans for the partial re-opening of the educational institution as well as full re-opening of the educational institution.
- Refer to the State Examinations Committee for contingency plans for exam classes where needed.
- Educational institutions must plan for managing staff shortages due to staff being sick or taking leave due to their children being sick.

6. Guidance for caring for a student with Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza in the residential educational institution

If a student in the educational institution has Pandemic (H1N1) 2009, they should if possible return home, or if unable to do so, remain isolated from other children for seven days from onset of symptoms.

- Isolation of cases:
 - a. If possible they should return home for seven days.
 - b. If unable to return home, the educational institution should identify appropriate accommodation for caring for the ill student. This ideally should be a single room, ideally en suite.
 - c. Sick students should not take part in any communal activities for the duration of their isolation.
 - d. Having regard for the welfare of the student, visitor access should be kept to a minimum.
- Staff:
 - a. The educational institution should identify which member of staff will care for a student ill with influenza.
 - b. The number of staff who have close contact with the student during their illness should be kept to a minimum.
 - c. Staff looking after affected students should not work with asymptomatic students.
 - d. Staff at risk of complications if infected (pregnant women or those with an underlying condition with increased risk of influenza-related complications) should NOT care for symptomatic students (see ‘Guidance on caring for persons at home with Pandemic (H1N1) 2009’ at www.hpsc.ie).
 - e. Staff should clean their hands thoroughly with soap and water or alcohol hand rub before and after any contact with symptomatic students or staff and their environment.

- f. Staff should use a surgical facemask on entering the room of a sick student or if within one metre of a sick student.
- g. Staff and students should be encouraged to avoid touching their eyes, nose and mouth.
- h. If a nurse is available to look after a student with Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 they should follow ‘Infection Prevention and Control Precautions for all health care facilities ’ at www.hpsc.ie.
- Cleaning of symptomatic student’s environment and belongings should be consistent with ‘Guidance on caring for persons at home with Pandemic (H1N1) 2009’ at www.hpsc.ie.
- Consideration should be given to asking symptomatic students to wear a surgical mask, if this can be tolerated, if they have to leave their single room.

7. Guidance on caring for staff and students who were in close contact with a case of Pandemic (H1N1) 2009

- Staff and students who were in close contact with a case of Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza should be vigilant for symptoms of flu like illness and seek medical advice if any symptoms appear. It is particularly important for people in a defined risk group for severe outcomes of Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 to seek immediate medical attention if they develop any symptoms of flu (even mild).

Appendix 1.

Specific guidance for caring for cases in different residential educational institutions

Note: Cases should be sent home if possible. However, if this is not possible, the following guidance should be followed.

Boarding schools with a school nurse and sick bay.

- Student should be isolated in a single room with separate bathroom and toilet.
- Nurse should provide care for student.
- Nurse should follow ‘Infection prevention and control precautions for all health care facilities’ at www.hpsc.ie.

Residential Summer Schools- i.e. adult/adolescent educational colleges for sports or the arts etc.

These institutions may have challenges with large numbers of overseas students who cannot go home

- The organisation must designate (in anticipation) accommodation suitable for caring for an ill student/pupil who cannot go home or for during the period while the ill pupil is waiting to go home.
- Persons caring for ill students should follow the ‘Guidance for caring for persons at home with Pandemic (H1N1) 2009’ at www.hpsc.ie .

Gaeltacht (where students are placed with Irish families/Bean an Ti) or Summer Schools for Foreign Students (where students are placed with Irish families)

Accommodation in Gaeltacht areas and Summer Schools will generally be family homes and isolating a case into a single ensuite room may be difficult. The emphasis should be on sending the case home for isolation as soon as possible. However the educational institution must plan for when this is not possible.

- The organisation should consider designating (in anticipation) one house that will accommodate sick students.
- If it is not possible to designate an entire house, at a minimum, rooms with ensuite facilities should be identified, where sick students can be placed. This may necessitate moving students into other houses.
- One designated adult should care for the sick students and should follow the ‘Guidance for caring for persons at home with Pandemic (H1N1) 2009’ at www.hpsc.ie .
- If facilities are not available for isolation, the organisation must ensure that plans are in place to send sick students home without delay (if within Ireland).