

SAN ANTONIO METROPOLITAN HEALTH DISTRICT



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Dear Bexar County School Superintendents,

Thank you for your participation in yesterday afternoon's conference call and for your continued support and cooperation in this developing Influenza H1N1 (swine flu) outbreak and investigation. Again, we would like to assure you that Metro Health is working aggressively with our federal, state and local partners to monitor and respond to new events and guidance.

Our epidemiology teams are actively gathering information from potential and known cases to track the spread of the illness and introduce measures to control the virus. As was stated, we do have confirmed and probable cases within Bexar County and expect to have an increase in the reported numbers as the submitted specimens continue to be tested and official confirmatory results become available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). We will follow up with any district that has a confirmed or probable case of novel H1N1 influenza (swine flu) within the district and provide individual recommendations at that time.

We are reviewing and sharing guidance as it becomes available for the general public, healthcare providers, businesses, schools and others. Notably, new guidance has been released today from the CDC recommending that schools not close for probable or confirmed cases unless advised to close by local officials. (www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance/) At this time Metro Health is not recommending the closure of any schools in Bexar County. This could change in the future if new information indicates a cluster of cases or current transmission within a school.

Please encourage your staff, faculty and parents to visit our website at www.sanantonio.gov/HEALTH/swineflu.html or call our swine flu hotline at 210-207-5779 if they have questions or need updated information.

While CDC has taken a lead role in developing new guidelines, they continue to make clear that decisions for community response to this influenza outbreak need to be made locally. At this time Metro Health is not recommending the closure of any schools in Bexar County. This could change in the future if new information indicates a cluster of cases or current transmission within a school.

In order to make informed decisions about the presence of Influenza H1N1 in our community, and in any particular school, it is critical that we have an active school surveillance system in place. Based on our historical data, normal school absenteeism ranges from 4% - 6% and increases to 8% - 12% during the regular flu season. Metro Health would like to monitor daily absenteeism from all school districts to identify schools that have an absenteeism rate greater than 12% for two consecutive days. If any school should reach this threshold, additional investigation and planning discussion would be initiated between Metro Health and the school district.

Finally, we encourage you to continue to reinforce good public health precautions among your staff, faculty and students:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it. If you do not have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your sleeve or the inside of your elbow.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs can easily enter your body this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people. Stay home if you are sick for 7 days after your symptoms begin or until you have been symptom-free for 24 hours, whichever is longer. This is to keep from infecting others and spreading the virus further.

Thank you for your continued partnership in responding to the Influenza H1N1 outbreak and your ongoing commitment to the health and safety of your students, faculty and staff.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fernando A. Guerra". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Fernando A. Guerra, M.D., M.P.H.
Director of Health