

DRAFT Guidance for Child Care/ECE Programs on limiting spread of influenza

[CDC Guidance](#) on Child Care and Early Childhood Education Programs
[Technical Report](#) for Child Care and Early Childhood Education Programs

Children less than 5 years of age are at increased risk of complications from influenza (flu); the risk is greater among children less than 2 years old. Importantly, infants less than 6 months of age represent a particularly vulnerable group because they are too young to receive the seasonal or 2009 H1N1 influenza vaccine; as a result, individuals responsible for caring for these children constitute a high-priority group for early vaccination

Limiting the spread of influenza to these children should be a very high priority at this time. Absenteeism rates in the public schools are now in excess of 30% in some schools and that is indicative of widespread disease in the community. Typically influenza spreads first among school children and then into the general community. We can expect to see significantly more cases over the next few weeks. While more vaccine is available each week the need still is much greater than the available vaccine at this time, a situation that is likely to persist for some weeks.

Vaccinate Now. The best way to protect children in child care and early childhood education settings is to vaccinate those in these settings against influenza. Especially because families associated with these centers are much more likely to have both those at highest risk of serious illness, hospitalization and even rarely death and those that are very efficient at spreading the disease (young children). Pregnant women and children under 6 months of age are particularly vulnerable to this disease.

Stay Home When Sick. Staying home when sick is an essential part of limiting the spread of disease. As the San Juan County Health Officer I recommend that all staff and children be excluded from the setting until 5 days after the onset of symptoms PLUS 24 hours after the resolution of fever if fever last longer than 5 days (with or without antiviral medications).

Health Check Plan and Separate Ill and Healthy. Facilities should conduct health checks on all children and staff daily and when symptoms of illness are present they should be sent home as soon as is practical and should be isolated from others while awaiting transport

home.

Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette. Hand washing, using hand gels and covering ones cough should be an integral part of the program for everyone.

Environmental Cleaning. Routine cleaning of the most commonly touched items is important as well.

Early Treatment if Ill. Please encourage early treatment of ill children and staff who have high risk conditions for serious complications from flu.

Closure Plan. Consider closure of the facility if there is sustained and extensive transmission. Many facilities choose to close if there infection rates are similar to what we are seeing in some public schools now (30% absenteeism). This is even more important in childcare settings as the children there are at significantly higher risk of serious complications. It is essential that a discussion take place now with parents about how they would manage childcare if the facility were to close for a period of time to limit spread of the disease. Thinking through other arrangements for childcare is essential to closure being a good choice for both the families and the community.

There are a number of additional recommendations in the CDC Guidance on how to manage exposures in the event of increased severity of disease. These should be reviewed by your program and a plan should be made on how and when to implement such strategies. One of these should be implemented at this time if there are unvaccinated children under 2 years of age in the facility.

Because of the serious risk of complications for these children when there is a pool of unvaccinated children in a facility those children with ill siblings should remain home for 5 days from the day the first household member becomes ill.