

Lake County Public Health & CSKT Tribal Health Departments

-Working together for a healthy community-



DATE: September 28, 2009

TO: Parents, Teachers and School Staff

FROM: Lake County Public Health and CSKT Tribal Health

We have been receiving questions from parents with concerns about 2009 H1N1 influenza. This letter may help you to prevent illness in your family this flu season.

2009 H1N1 influenza continues to cause illness across the globe and in Montana. There is the likelihood that as children congregate in schools, we will see more cases in our community. Therefore, we are taking steps to reduce the spread of flu in our schools. We want to keep the schools open to students and functioning in a normal manner during this flu season. **We need *your* help to do this.**

Schools are working closely with Lake County Public Health and CSKT Tribal Health Departments to monitor flu conditions and make decisions about the best steps to take concerning schools.

We are doing everything we can to keep schools functioning as usual. Here are a few things you can do to help.

- **Teach your children to wash their hands** often with soap and water. Help set a good example by doing this yourself.
- **Teach your children respiratory etiquette.** The main way flu spreads is from person to person in the droplets produced by coughs and sneezes, so it's important to cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow or shoulder, not into your hands.
- **Teach your children not to share personal items** like drinks, food or unwashed utensils.
- **Know the signs and symptoms of the flu.** Symptoms of the flu include fever greater than 100 degrees, cough, sore throat, runny/stuffy nose, body aches, headache and fatigue. Some people may also vomit or have diarrhea.
- **Do not send children to school if they are sick.** Any children who are determined to be sick while at school will be sent home. *Keep sick children home for at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever *without* the aid of anti-fever medications.
- **Have a plan** to care for your children at home because schools are being encouraged to send sick children home.

There are two possibly confusing things this flu season:

- 1) There will be seasonal influenza in the community just like we have every year. People are strongly encouraged to get their seasonal flu shot. The seasonal flu shot will *not* protect against pandemic influenza.
- 2) There will be a limited amount of vaccine available for 2009 H1N1. This initial allotment will go to those at highest risk (i.e., pregnant women, people who live with or care for infants <6 months of age, children 6 months-4 years of age and children and adolescents 5-18 with chronic medical conditions.) We will inform everyone regarding vaccine availability and guidelines when the information becomes available.

We will keep the schools and community updated with new information as it becomes available. If you have questions or concerns regarding influenza (including H1N1), you may call the Lake County and CSKT Tribal Health Influenza Information Line at 883-7292. Please do not contact your school for 2009 H1N1 flu information.