

Recommended Employer Responses for the 2009-2010 Flu Season

Recommended Action Steps under Current Flu Conditions (similar severity as in Spring/Summer 2009)

If the severity of illness in the fall and winter is similar to that observed in the spring and summer of 2009, the effects of 2009 H1N1 influenza may not have substantial impacts on absenteeism, though some increase in absenteeism over the spring season is anticipated. When larger numbers of people become ill, correspondingly larger numbers of people will become seriously ill and may require hospitalization.

Sick persons should stay home

- Advise workers to be alert to any signs of fever and any other signs of influenza-like illness before reporting to work each day, and notify their supervisor and stay home if they are ill. Employees who are ill should not travel while they are ill.
- CDC recommends that employees with influenza-like illness remain at home until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever (100° F [37.8° C] or greater), or signs of a fever, without the use of fever-reducing medications.
- Expect sick employees to be out for about 3 to 5 days in most cases, even if antiviral medications are used.
- Ensure that your sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance and that employees are well aware of these policies.
- Talk with companies that provide your company with contract or temporary workers about the importance of sick workers staying home and encourage them to develop non-punitive leave policies.
- Do not require a doctor's note for workers who are ill with influenza-like illness to validate their illness or to return to work, as doctor's offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and may not be able to provide such documentation in a timely way.
- Employees who are well but who have an ill family member at home with influenza can go to work as usual. However, these employees should monitor their health every day, and notify their supervisor and stay home if they become ill. Employers should maintain flexible policies that permit employees to stay home to care for an ill family member. Employers should be aware that more workers may need to stay at home to care for ill children or other ill family members than is usual.

Sick employees at work should be asked to go home

- CDC recommends that workers who appear to have an influenza-like illness upon arrival or become ill during the day be promptly separated from other workers and be advised to go **home** until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever (100° F [37.8° C] or greater), or signs of a fever, without the use of fever-reducing medications.

- Those who become ill with symptoms of an influenza-like illness during the work day should be:
 - Separated from other workers and asked to go home promptly. (For recommendations on personal protective equipment for a person assisting the ill employee, see [Interim Recommendations for Facemask and Respirator Use to Reduce Novel Influenza A \(H1N1\) Virus Transmission](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/masks.htm); <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/masks.htm>.)
 - When possible and if they can tolerate it, workers with influenza-like illness should be given a surgical mask to wear before they go home if they cannot be placed in an area away from others.
- If an employee becomes ill at work, inform fellow employees of their possible exposure in the workplace to influenza-like illness but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). For more information on privacy issues, please refer to: http://www.flu.gov/faq/workplace_questions/equal_employment/index.html#PrivacyIssues. Employees exposed to a sick co-worker should monitor themselves for symptoms of influenza-like illness and stay home if they are sick.

Take measures to protect employees who are at higher risk for complications of influenza

- People at higher risk for complications from influenza include pregnant women; children under 5 years of age; adults and children who have chronic lung disease (such as asthma), heart disease, diabetes, diseases that suppress the immune system and other chronic medical conditions; and those who are 65 years or older.⁷

Prepare for increased numbers of employee absences due to illness in employees and their family members, and plan ways for essential business functions to continue.

Prepare for the possibility of school dismissal or temporary closure of child care programs

- Although school dismissals or closures of child care programs are not likely to be generally recommended at this level of severity, they are possible in some jurisdictions.
- Be prepared to allow workers to stay home to care for children if schools are dismissed or child care programs are closed.
- Strongly recommend that parents not bring their children with them to work while schools are dismissed.
- Ensure that your leave policies are flexible and non-punitive.