

Mission:

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



Ron DeSantis
Governor

Scott A. Rivkees, MD
State Surgeon General

Vision: To be the **Healthiest State** in the Nation

January 6, 2020

Dear Principal or Administrator:

Influenza activity levels are increasing across the state and the nation, especially in children. So far this season, over 80% of all outbreaks have been reported in facilities serving children. The best way to defend against seasonal influenza and its potentially severe complications in children is to ensure they receive a seasonal influenza vaccine each year. **We ask that you please advise students, teachers, and staff to get vaccinated. We also strongly recommend that you send a letter home to parents encouraging them to vaccinate their children and keep sick children home from school (draft letter provided).**

People infected with influenza are most likely to pass the disease to others early in course of their illness (within the first three days after symptoms begin). **This means it is important to review school illness exclusion policies with staff, teachers, and parents to ensure parents keep children sick with influenza symptoms home.** Symptoms of influenza often include fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose, body aches, headaches, or fatigue. Influenza vaccines are safe and continue to be the best way to protect students, teachers, staff, and their families from influenza infection. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices continues to recommend influenza vaccine to everyone aged 6 months and older.

The Florida Department of Health urges schools to help fight the spread of influenza by:

- **Sending a letter to parents encouraging influenza vaccination and reminding them to keep sick children home;** provided on our website: [FloridaHealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/influenza/flu-resources.html](https://www.FloridaHealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/influenza/flu-resources.html), as well as "The Flu: A Guide for Parents" fact sheet found here: www.cdc.gov/flu/highrisk/parents.htm?CDC_AA_reVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fflu%2Fparents%2Findex.htm.
 - To locate influenza vaccine, contact your physician, your local county health department, or visit: [FloridaHealth.gov/findaflushot](https://www.FloridaHealth.gov/findaflushot).
- **Encouraging both teachers and staff to get vaccinated.**
- **Rapidly identifying sick students, teachers, and staff; and ensuring they stay home when they are sick.**
- Promoting good respiratory etiquette: students, teachers, and staff should cover their noses and mouths with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, wash their hands often with soap and warm water, and avoid touching their eyes, noses, or mouths.
- Cleaning and disinfecting commonly handled surfaces or objects on a regular basis.
- **Contacting your local county health department right away to report any suspected outbreaks of influenza or influenza-like illness.**

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For more information on preventing influenza and for school-specific resources, please visit: www.cdc.gov/flu/school/. Please reach out to your local county health department with any questions (FloridaHealth.gov/CHDEpiContact). Thank you for your important contribution to protecting the health of those in the community you serve!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "SAR", is positioned above the printed name.

Scott A. Rivkees, MD
State Surgeon General