



**THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK**
Carole F. Huxley
Interim Commissioner and
President of The University



**NEW YORK STATE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**
Richard F. Daines, M.D.
Commissioner

TO: District Superintendents of Schools
Superintendents of Public and Nonpublic Schools
Administrators of Charter Schools
School Principals
Directors of School-Based Health Clinics
Local Health Department Officials

FROM: Interim Commissioner Carole F. Huxley, NYS Education Department

Commissioner Richard F. Daines, M.D., NYS Department of Health

SUBJECT: School Absenteeism and School Dismissal Monitoring for Novel H1N1 Influenza (Flu)
Virus in K-12 Educational Facilities for the 2009-2010 School Year

DATE: September 11, 2009

With the recognition of novel H1N1 influenza virus in New York State, elementary and secondary schools began working collaboratively with local health departments in May 2009 to share important data on student absenteeism and illness via the New York State Department of Health Commerce System. Building on this partnership, and with the expected return of novel H1N1 influenza, the Commerce System will continue to be used to facilitate this reporting for the 2009-2010 school year.

Based on user feedback, the School Survey reporting system has been modified to make it easier to enter absenteeism survey data and retrieve reports. This will enable real-time monitoring of absenteeism in your school, district, and county, and allows for early identification of situations that may require rapid, critical, and data driven decisions.

In addition, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has asked all states to report schools that close due to excessive absenteeism or illness. To this end, an additional, short survey form has been added to the school surveillance reporting activity, titled "CDC School Dismissal Form." It is extremely important that, at a minimum, every school that closes in New York State due to illness or excessive absenteeism submit this short form, which will then be forwarded to CDC. Decision making on school closures will continue to be a local decision made by school officials in consultation with their medical directors and in partnership with local health officials. Information on training for these survey forms will be forthcoming.

Entering data in these forms, while voluntary, will provide schools, districts, and local health officials with up-to-date situational awareness on influenza and other issues. We strongly encourage all public and nonpublic elementary and secondary educational institutions to cooperate with local, state, and federal health officials and to provide illness-related data on early dismissal, absenteeism and closure information using this reporting system on the NYSDOH Commerce System.

Attachments: School Surveillance and Reporting System: School 2009 Absentee Surveillance
School Surveillance and Reporting System: CDC School Dismissal Form