

Dear Chief State School Officers:

Now that we are in the season of influenza, and mindful of other infectious diseases, the U.S. Department of Education would like to refer you to information and resources for district leaders, schools, and educators on steps that can be taken to guard against the spread of disease. We continue to appreciate the work you do to foster a healthy environment in America's schools and hope that these materials will support your efforts.

Seasonal "flu" occurs between October and May and typically peaks in January and February. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) predicts that this will be a particularly heavy flu season. Recently, CDC issued a health advisory saying that the vaccine developed for 2014-2015 is less effective than usual; however, CDC encourages everyone, especially school personnel, to get vaccinated because children are among the most vulnerable to the disease.

Complete information about the flu and how to contain and manage it is given at www.flu.gov and at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/>. The [Readiness Emergency Management for Schools \(REMS\) Technical Assistance \(TA\) Center](http://www.rems.ed.gov/KeepSchoolsSafeFromDiseases.aspx) also has useful resources and information for addressing infectious diseases as part of a comprehensive emergency operations plan (EOP), including coping with a widespread outbreak at <http://www.rems.ed.gov/KeepSchoolsSafeFromDiseases.aspx>. We encourage you to convey this information to your district and school leaders and remind teachers, students, and others to:

- Wash hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer;
- Avoid touching eyes, nose, or mouth;
- Avoid close contact with those who are already sick;
- Get plenty of sleep;
- Eat healthy food and drink plenty of fluids;
- Cover your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing with a tissue or the crook of your arm;
- Stay home if ill for at least 24 hours after fever is gone.

Districts and schools may want to review their EOPs with public health authorities, as well as plan for continuity of teaching and learning during a school dismissal, in preparation for the height of the flu season or other infectious disease outbreak. As with all health-related instances, districts and schools should maintain the privacy and identity of individual students and teachers in conformity with applicable privacy laws.

The Ebola virus outbreak in West Africa remains in the news, and CDC, the U.S. Department of Justice, and the U.S. Department of Education have prepared resources for school districts on this topic. These resources make clear that, in the United States, Ebola remains a very rare disease that has affected only a handful of people. To date, no cases of Ebola in U.S. schools have been identified, and no community transmission has occurred in schools. The most likely situations regarding Ebola exposure that educators will face will pertain to perceived rather than any actual risk. Nevertheless, the following resources have been developed for public information and are available at www.ed.gov/ebola-response:

- K-12 Schools Guidance
- Office for Civil Rights Guidance
- Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services Guidance
- Continuity of Teaching and Learning Guidance

We hope that you will familiarize yourself with these resources and that you will share them through all of your available networks and communication vehicles to help ensure they reach the appropriate audiences.

Thanks for all you do every day to support the health, safety, and education of our students.

Sincerely,

Arne Duncan