

Template for Employer Leave Policy

What is Novel H1N1 (previously called 'Swine Flu')?

Influenza viruses circulate and cause illness in people each year, usually during winter and spring months (*seasonal flu*). These viruses can change and combine with animal influenza strains (*bird or swine flu*) resulting in a flu strain that has not been identified before. New (novel) flu strains can cause widespread illness in humans because most people will not have immunity to it. When a novel or new flu virus affects humans, illness can spread rapidly around the world (*pandemic flu*). Pandemic flu strains may cause illness ranging from mild to severe and the severity may change over the course of the outbreak.

Novel H1N1 Flu (initially called swine flu) is a new virus currently causing illness in people in all 50 states and in many countries around the world. It contains a previously unknown combination of genetic material from swine, avian (bird) and human influenza viruses.

What are the signs/symptoms of the Novel H1N1 Flu?

The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) expects that illness with this flu virus may continue for some time. As a result, you or people around you may become ill. If so, you need to recognize the symptoms and know what to do. Symptoms of Novel H1N1 are similar to that of regular seasonal flu and include fever and respiratory tract illness (cough, sore throat, runny nose), headache, muscle aches, chills, fatigue, and some may have vomiting and diarrhea.

What should I do if I have symptoms of the flu?

Employees should self monitor daily for signs and symptoms of respiratory illness with fever. Any employee that develops symptoms of influenza type illness should be instructed not to report to work, or if at work, the employee should notify their supervisor, put on a surgical mask if one is available and tolerable, avoid others, and go home immediately.

If employees should have symptoms of influenza type illness:

- Contact their Supervisor.
- Employees that are health care providers should stay home for 7 days after onset of illness or until symptoms have resolved, whichever is longer, except to seek medical care or for other necessities.
- Employees that are non-health care providers should stay home until they are fever free for 24 hours without taking a fever reducing medicine (Tylenol, Advil), except to seek medical care or for other necessities.
- Minimize contact with others, including family, as much as possible to prevent the spread of flu. In the home wear a surgical mask, if available and tolerable, when sharing a common space with other household members.
- It is expected that most people will recover without needing medical care. In a large number of cases of suspected influenza, testing and anti-viral treatment are unnecessary. The decision to test or treat should be based on a person's health status. If you have serious influenza illness or

are at high risk for flu complications (age 65 years or older, pregnant, have a chronic medical condition such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease, and/or have an impaired or weakened immune system), contact your health care provider or seek medical care. If you must leave your home to seek medical care, wear a facemask, if available and tolerable, and cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue.

- Absence due to influenza type illness will not be considered an **unscheduled leave**.
- If you must be absent from work due to the flu, you will have to use accrued leave and you will not be paid once you have exhausted your accrued leave. However, you will not be penalized on your evaluation for taking **leave without pay**.

What if a family member has the flu?

- **There is no recommendation at this time to restrict non-ill family members and household contacts from work, school or community gatherings even if their household contacts have the flu.**
- As stated above, the CDC expects illness with this flu virus will continue for some time. Please use this time to make care arrangements for those you are responsible for.
- If you must be absent from work to care for a family member, the usual leave policies will apply for unscheduled leave and leave without pay.

What can I do to help prevent the spread of the flu?

To prevent the transmission of all respiratory infections, including novel H1N1, respiratory hygiene/cough etiquette infection control measures should be implemented at the first point of contact with a potentially infected person.

- Wash hands frequently using soap and water. This can be supplemented with hand sanitizers.
- Use alcohol based hand sanitizer whenever soap and water are not available
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Discard the tissue in the trash. If no tissue is available use your sleeve to cough/sneeze into; do not use your hand to cover your nose or mouth.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
- Disinfect frequently touched or shared surfaces (daily and prior to each person's use)
- Obtain seasonal flu vaccine – this will be made available to all Hamilton County employees in mid-September. You will receive more information on the schedule at a later date.
- Obtain Swine Flu (novel H1N1) vaccine upon availability if you fall into one of the below groups:
 - Pregnant women
 - Health care workers and emergency medical providers
 - Caregivers of children less than 6 months of age
 - Persons between 6 months and 24 years of age
 - Persons between 25 and 64 if you have an underlying medical condition