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INFORMATION MEMORANDUM

TO: All Head Start and Early Head Start Grantees

SUBJECT: Influenza Preparedness

INFORMATION:

The purpose of this Information Memorandum is to provide Early Head Start and Head Start agencies with an approach to implementing the recommendations of the [CDC Guidance on Helping Child Care and Early Childhood Programs Respond to Influenza during the 2009-2010 Influenza Season](#). In addition to this guidance from CDC, additional resources are provided at the end of this Information Memorandum to assist programs during the 2009-2010 influenza season.

Early Head Start and Head Start grantee and delegate agencies serve children and families who are identified as having a higher risk for complications as a result of seasonal influenza and the 2009 novel H1N1 flu virus. In order to assist the communities that you serve, Head Start agencies should focus on three basic elements to incorporate the CDC’s guidance:

- Know your partners.
- Know your organization.
- Know your community medical resources.

Know Your Partners

Identify and communicate clearly to your staff, parents, and partners the sources of authoritative up-to-date information, guidance, and resources that are used by your agency to develop and guide decision-making about your agency’s response to influenza.

- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services – Flu.gov
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- Administration for Children and Families/Office of Head Start
- State/Territorial Health Department
- local public health authorities
- local clinical and social services safety-net providers

Know Your Organization

Review and revise (when necessary, based upon the most recent guidance) your policies, procedures and practices for:

- exclusion and return to care for children;
- daily health checks;
- illness and return to work for volunteers and staff;
- infection prevention and control (hand washing, respiratory etiquette, cleaning and disinfecting surfaces, provision for isolation of ill children or staff while awaiting transport out of the child-care setting);
- support of early childhood education experiences during circumstances of temporary modification or restriction of program options (such as coverage of staff absences by substitutes with appropriate background checks; reorganization of classes into smaller groups of children (per CDC Guidance); educational materials for home use in the event of center closures); and
- family support during prolonged closure of centers.

Know Your Community Medical Resources

- Determine that each enrolled child has an ongoing source of continuous, accessible care (including that they have retained their enrollment in health care coverage);
- Verify that each child with a known high-risk health condition has ongoing contact with primary care and specialty providers.
- Verify that each child is up-to-date on all required immunizations.
- Determine that each family of a child identified with a high-risk health condition (such as asthma, diabetes, epilepsy and other conditions as described in the CDC Guidance) has enough medication, supplies, and necessary equipment to last under conditions of restriction or closure of center-based programs or if there is a recommendation from public health authorities or the child's health care provider that the child or family avoid travel outside of the home except as needed to seek medical attention.
- Review each child's health care instructions such as an Asthma Action Plan, instructions for the management of diabetes or epilepsy (seizures), medications, supplies, and staff competency for care to be provided by staff within the program.
- Encourage parents and guardians of high-risk children to discuss the following with their health care provider:
 - instructions regarding temporarily removing the child from the child care setting; and
 - instructions for how and when parents should contact their child's health care provider for evaluation of the child's medical needs, including the need to take antiviral medications and for other concerns.
- Encourage the vaccination of children, parents, and staff as recommended by the CDC.

Resources:

Flu.gov

[CDC Guidance on Helping Child Care and Early Childhood Programs Respond to Influenza during the 2009–2010 Influenza Season](#)

[Technical Report for State and Local Public Health Officials and Child Care and Early Childhood Providers on CDC Guidance on Helping Child Care and Early Childhood Programs Respond to Influenza during the 2009–2010 Influenza Season](#)

[Preparing for the Flu: A Communication Toolkit for Child Care and Early Childhood Programs](#)

[CDC](#)

[Pandemic Flu Information](#) on the ECLKC

[Emergency Preparedness](#) on the ECLKC

Please direct any questions on this important matter to your OHS Regional Office.

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