

Guidance for Sarasota County Businesses and Employers Regarding H1N1 (swine) Influenza

This guidance is designed to help employers plan and respond to increases of flu-like illness that may occur in the upcoming weeks, as “flu-season” begins. The goal of this document is to provide direction for recognizing and monitoring flu-like illness in employees, responding to increases in illness, and planning for increases in worker absenteeism as a result of illness in staff or their families.

Flu Facts:

- The primary symptoms of influenza are **fever** (greater than 100°F) with cough and/or sore throat. In addition, other symptoms may occur.
- Flu is transmitted by close contact with sick persons, especially by uncovered coughs and sneezes. Flu can also be transmitted by touching contaminated surfaces and then touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- The incubation time, or time from exposure to illness onset, ranges from 1-7 days, but is usually less than 4 days. This means that many people working close together may become ill within a short period of time.

Actions Steps:

- **Monitor employees for flu-like illness:** Develop protocols to determine if employees who stay home from work have a flu-like illness and have a person in each office in charge of tracking these illnesses by day. This information should be used to anticipate increases in absenteeism and signal urgent Continuity of Operations planning activities to continue essential functions or services.
- **Keep sick employees home:** Employees with flu-like illness (fever with cough or sore throat) should **immediately** be sent home and remain home for 24 hours after their fever has resolved, without the use of anti-fever medication. This time frame is usually 3-5 days. **Employees who must be absent as a result flu should not fear losing their jobs.** Employers should develop flexible leave schedules for employees.
Employees who do not have flu symptoms and have ill family members at home (who do not require their care) can continue to work in their normal workplace setting.
- **Employees who must stay home with ill family members should not fear losing their jobs.** Please note that daycare centers will not accept nor care for ill children.
- **Cough etiquette:** Coughs and sneezes must be covered.
- **Improve hand hygiene:** Ask employees and clients to wash their hands with soap and water or alcohol based hand sanitizers frequently, especially after coughs/sneezes and contact with high touch surfaces/items.
Employers should have hand sanitizer/soap and tissues available in the workplace.
- **Routinely clean high touch surfaces/items:** Routine disinfectants are effective against influenza.
- **Encourage vaccination for seasonal flu and H1N1 flu when available:** Seasonal flu will be available in September and H1N1 flu vaccine will likely be available for target groups in mid-October.

For more information please visit: <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/workplaceplanning/guidance.pdf>