

# SCHOOL NOTICE!

# PANDEMIC INFLUENZA

## *Preparedness*

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**P**andemic influenza is a new influenza (flu) virus never seen in humans. Pandemic influenza has occurred three times in the last 100 years. The worst influenza pandemic ever recorded was the 1918 Spanish Flu. Pandemic influenza is not just a healthcare issue; it is an economic, social and political issue. Currently, a virus of most concern is circulating in Asia, Europe and Africa and it is called H5N1 avian influenza (bird flu). This virus is only missing one genetic change to make it easier to transmit person to person. When this change occurs, it may cause the next influenza pandemic.



An influenza pandemic could spread rapidly and cause millions of people to get sick, seriously straining health care systems and affecting the ability of government and the private sector to provide essential services. Organizations could experience a reduction in workforce as staff becomes sick, others remain at home to care for sick family members, or care for children if schools were to close.

The Alabama Department of Public Health and State Department of Education recognize that school administrators, teachers, staff, and parents should be planning for pandemic influenza, particularly its effects on children. Schools are instrumental in keeping their communities healthy by taking actions, such as, posting information about hand hygiene, providing flu prevention messages, and being vigilant about cleaning and disinfecting classroom materials.

The Alabama Department of Public Health, in partnership with the State Department of Education, has coordinated planning efforts to prepare for a possible pandemic influenza outbreak by providing schools in Alabama with educational materials for teachers, staff, students and parents.

In the Spring of 2007, the Alabama Department of Public Health provided and distributed through Alabama State Department of Education, all public schools in the state with a series of CD-ROMs to educate, raise awareness, and facilitate planning efforts for pandemic flu preparedness in schools. The Alabama Department of Public Health will provide private schools in the state with a series of CD-ROMs.

Each CD contains an automated, audio presentation kit designed to allow the teacher to choose a 60-, 45-, or 30-minute presentation from the 3 lessons provided by selecting from the main menu. There are 4 grad-specific CDs consisting of the following:

- ***Pandemic Flu Preparedness: Kindergarten through Third Grade***
- ***Pandemic Flu Preparedness: Fourth through Sixth Grade***
- ***Pandemic Flu Preparedness: Junior High***
- ***Pandemic Flu Preparedness: Individuals and Families (appropriate for high school students, teachers, staff, and parents)***

There is a great deal of planning underway at the federal, state and local level. Please contact your local health department to participate in planning for your county and community. We hope you will work with us to help educate the community about the importance of pandemic influenza planning and preparation.

Thank you for your continued efforts to provide safe schools for our children, parents, educators and communities.

For more information on pandemic flu, visit the Alabama Department of Public Health's website at [www.adph.org/pandemicflu](http://www.adph.org/pandemicflu) or the Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov).