**WHAT IS HAPPENING WITH THE H1N1 FLU IN THE WACHUSETT REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT?**

**Where can I get the best information regarding H1N1?**
The Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) have excellent websites, both of which provide up-to-date information regarding H1N1.

**What is happening in schools?**
As you may know, flu can be easily spread from person to person. Therefore, we are taking steps to reduce the spread of flu in the Wachusett Regional School District. The best defense is hand washing and cough etiquette. Elementary school classrooms are equipped with sinks and soap; schools have invested in hand sanitizer, which is readily available in hallways, outside cafeteria doors and in the nurse’s office.

**What was the purpose of the H1N1 survey?**
The purpose of the survey was to determine whether or not District families would take advantage of clinics held in our schools after school hours. Over 30% of families have indicated they WOULD take advantage of an after-hours H1N1 clinic in their local elementary school. This information indicated to the District that families were interested in participating in school-based clinics held after school hours. Since the target population of H1N1 is school-aged children, it seemed natural for the District to assist in any way possible.

**Will the District send notices to families whenever there is a suspected or confirmed case of H1N1?**
The District will not send notifications home when cases of Influenza-like Illness (ILI) are brought to our attention. Principals, however, may choose to send information home to notify parents of conditions within each building. The District will not disseminate information via Facebook, Twitter, IM or other social networking avenues.

**What if my child has already had the flu?**
If your child has had the flu, but was not tested specifically for H1N1, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health recommends that they be immunized against H1N1.

**What if my child’s doctor writes a note and I bring my child to school before the 24 hour waiting period?**
If the school nurse determines that your child is ill, you will be called to pick your child up from school. Physician’s notes do not supersede a school nurse’s decision to exclude a child presenting with ILI if the exclusion period has not been met (24 hours after ‘no fever’ with out the use of fever-reducing medications).

**Who is in charge of H1N1 clinics?**
Local Boards of Health are responsible for the logistics involved with H1N1 clinics including ordering, receiving storing and dispensing H1N1 vaccine. Local Boards of Health also assume responsibility for procuring trained volunteers (nurses, nursing students, pharmacists, etc.) to administer the vaccine at the clinics. ONLY PROPERLY TRAINED PERSONNEL WILL ADMINISTER SHOTS.

**When will clinics be held?**
At this time, there are no confirmed clinic dates. When local Boards of Health have been notified that they will be receiving vaccine, they will notify the District. The District will then begin notifying families. The District will notify families via backpack notices, Connect Ed calls, school newsletters and the District website (www.wrsd.net) of their town’s clinic schedule. The District will not disseminate information via Facebook, Twitter, IM or other social networking avenues.

**Why haven’t clinics been scheduled yet?**
Delays in production and shipment of H1N1 vaccine have delayed the scheduling of clinics. It is anticipated that shipments will reach local boards of health in mid-November. The District will notify families via backpack notices, Connect Ed calls, school newsletters and the District website (www.wrsd.net) of their town’s clinic schedule. The District will not disseminate information via Facebook, Twitter, IM or other social networking avenues.

**How will my family know when clinics have been scheduled?**
The District will have one week’s notification of upcoming clinic dates from local Boards of Health. Upon notification of clinic dates, the District will communicate information to families via backpack notices,
ConnectEd calls and updates on the District web-site (www.wrsd.net). Information can also be found on school websites and in school newsletters.

**How do I register for a clinic?**
Families will be to the District’s website (www.wrsd.net) to register for an appointment at their town’s clinic. There will be a one-week window for scheduling appointments.

**Is there a fee?**
No. Clinics are free of charge.

**Can my children participate in a clinic if we did not respond to the survey, or initially said “no”?**
Yes. The survey was for informational and planning purposes. Local boards of health will use information from the survey, local school enrollment numbers and available doses of vaccine to establish the number of appointments per clinic.

**Can my entire family participate in the school-based clinics?**
No. School-based H1N1 clinics will be for school-aged students residing in the district. Other family members, especially those in high-risk categories (infants less than 6 months of age, caregivers of children less than 6 months of age; pregnant women; health care providers) should call their local Board of Health (for general clinic information), or their primary care provider.

**Will my child get Flumist, or an injection?**
The vaccine your child receives at the school-based clinic depends upon the availability of each type at each clinic. Both applications have been deemed safe, however local Boards of Health cannot guarantee that families will have an option of Flumist or injection at these clinics.

**How many doses will my child need?**
Children aged 9 and under will need TWO DOSES; anyone 10 or older, ONE DOSE. The CDC recommends that persons with underlying medical conditions receive the injection vaccine.

**Is the H1N1 vaccine mandatory?**
The H1N1 vaccine is not mandatory. Families are strongly encouraged immunize against seasonal flu, and to discuss H1N1 immunization with their primary care physician. Children will not be kept out of school for not having been immunized. Children will be kept out of school if they exhibit symptoms of influenza-like illness (fever of 100.4° or higher; cough, etc.).

**Is there any reason my child would not be able to be immunized once we get to the clinic?**
Yes. If your child has an active fever, he/she would not be immunized. Also, if something discovered in the screening process, such as an allergy to eggs, your child may not be able to be immunized at the clinic. If you have questions, please contact your primary care physician.

**What can families do to help prevent the spread of colds and flu?**
Recommendations from the Center for Disease Control and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health:

- **Teach your children to wash their hands** often with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub.
- **Teach your children not to share** drinks, food or unwashed utensils, and to cover their coughs and sneezes with tissues.
- **Teach your children to** cover coughs or sneezes with the elbow, arm or sleeve instead of the hand when a tissue is unavailable.
- **Know the signs and symptoms of the flu.** Symptoms of the flu include fever (100.4° degrees Fahrenheit, 37.8 degrees Celsius or greater), cough, sore throat, a runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache and feeling very tired. Some people may also vomit or have diarrhea.
- **Keep sick children at home** for at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever, or do not have signs of fever, without using fever-reducing drugs. Keeping children with a fever at home will reduce the number of people who may get infected.
- **Do not send children to school if they are sick.** Any children who are determined to be sick while at school will be sent home.