

For release (DATE)

Contact: (PIO name and number)

LOCAL SCHOOLS REMAIN OPEN BUT PARENTS SHOULD PREPARE

Local schools remain open despite the confirmation of swine flu cases in a private school in Queens, New York City. Parents are asked, however, to prepare for possible closures if the new virus continues to spread. School and local health officials are working together to monitor the situation and parents will be updated with any important information.

“At this time, the local health department has advised us that students who are not ill can continue to attend school,” [NAME OF SCHOOL OFFICIAL] said. “School will remain open. We are consulting with local health officials regarding best practices for infection control. However, to keep flu from spreading to more people, we ask you to keep sick children home. Any children who come to school with flu-like symptoms or respiratory illness will be sent home.”

Flu-like symptoms include: fever (over 100 degrees F.), feverishness, cough, sore throat, runny nose, or stuffy nose. Additional symptoms may be experienced with swine flu, including muscle pain, fatigue, and sometimes vomiting or diarrhea. If you suspect your child is getting flu, it is essential that he/she does not attend school or go anywhere else—such as group childcare, the mall, or sporting events—where other people would be exposed to the virus. Children who are getting ill may exhibit different behavior than usual, such as eating less or being irritable.

If swine flu continues to spread and more students become ill, health officials say they may need to advise that schools be closed for a period of time. They urged parents to begin planning now for childcare in their home.

Health officials say parents can help protect their children and prevent the spread of swine flu as they would colds and other seasonal flu by taking the following precautions:

- Teach your children to wash hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds (about as long as it takes to sing the “Happy Birthday” song twice). Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
- Teach your children the proper use of hand sanitizer. Gels, rubs, and hand wipes all work well, as long as they contain at least 60% alcohol. Hand

wipes must be disposed of properly. Always read and follow label instructions when using hand sanitizer.

- Teach your children to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or by coughing into the inside of the elbow. Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
- Teach your children to stay at least three feet from people who are sick. That's the same distance as a yardstick.
- People who are sick should stay home from work or school and avoid other people until they are better.

Health officials stress that recommendations may change as more information becomes available. Parents are urged to monitor media reports. For more information on swine flu, visit www.nyhealth.gov or www.cdc.gov or the 24 hour toll-free hotline that New Yorkers across the State can use to get answers to their questions. The hotline is 1-800-808-1987.

[LOCAL WEBSITE INFORMATION].