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Dear Central Valley School District Families:

The health of our children is important to all of us. With the new school year underway, we are preparing for an active influenza season. Over the coming weeks and months, we expect to see cases of **H1N1 flu** (formerly called 'swine' flu) and seasonal flu among students and staff in Central Valley schools. I would like to take this opportunity to update you about preparations and anticipated response to influenza in our schools.

Education and Prevention

Influenza (the flu) is a highly contagious viral infection that affects the lungs and sinuses. We are actively reminding our staff and students to use simple hygiene techniques to prevent the spread of viruses, including:

- **Wash your hands often** – with soap and warm water, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- **Cover your nose and mouth** – cough or sneeze into your sleeve/elbow, not into your hands. You may also use a tissue when you sneeze, cough or blow your nose. Quickly throw away used tissues then wash your hands.
- **Avoid close contact with sick people** – most germs are spread when a sick person coughs, sneezes or talks.
- **Don't share** - food, utensils, beverages, towels, lipstick, toys or anything else that might become contaminated with germs.
- **Stay at home** - if you have a cold, fever, cough and/or flu-like symptoms.

Flu-like symptoms include fever (100°F or higher), cough, sneezing, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, tiredness, or extreme exhaustion.

Tips for staying healthy during the cold and flu season were included in an informational brochure sent home with students on the first day of school. The brochures are available on school information tables. We are also updating the hand washing posters in our schools to remind students and staff about the importance of proper hygiene.

Communications and Planning

The Central Valley School District is working closely with local public health officials to prepare for and track cases of H1N1 flu in our schools. We have formed an H1N1 Task Force of administrators to review and update our district's pandemic influenza plan for H1N1 flu. This planning includes a review of protocols regarding school closures, should the number of absent staff and students reach a level where we can longer operate. We are also reviewing the process to reopen schools when illness levels have subsided.

Central Valley schools will **not** be sending letters home as we identify isolated cases of influenza (H1N1 and/or seasonal flu) in our schools. However, if the absence rate reaches at least 10 percent in a particular school, parents will be notified.

Illness Response and Tracking

Our school employees are now on alert for students with flu-like symptoms and are acting quickly to send ill students home. While they are waiting to be picked up, students with flu-like symptoms may be asked to wear a mask to prevent the spread of illness to others.

Parents who pick up a child with flu-like symptoms at school will receive an *Influenza: Prescription for Health* flyer from the school. The flyer contains details about caring for your child and the recommendation to keep sick children at home until their symptoms are gone and until they have been free of fever (less than 100°F, without the use of fever-reducing medicine) for at least 24 hours. Our schools are tracking student and staff illness and reporting high levels of absenteeism to the Spokane Regional Health District.

Our teachers and custodians are remaining vigilant about continual cleaning of surfaces where germs reside. This includes frequent wiping of desks, keyboards, door handles, faucets, countertops, and other surfaces with disinfectant solution.

What You Can Do

As a parent, there is much that you can do to help prevent the spread of influenza and other viruses in our schools. Most importantly, please keep your sick child at home until completely well. When you report your student's absence to your school, please provide details about your child's specific symptoms. And, continue to reinforce proper hand washing and hygiene techniques with your children throughout the year.

Parents are also encouraged to plan for childcare at home if your child gets sick or their school is closed. In addition, if you have children with asthma or other medical conditions that put them at higher risk for the flu, talk to your healthcare provider now about a plan to protect them during the flu season.

Your patience is appreciated as we work to follow public health guidelines by sending sick children home and asking questions about your child's specific symptoms to better track cases of influenza in our community. Visit our district website at www.cvsd.org where we will post timely informational updates as the flu season progresses.

Thank you for your understanding and support as we work together to keep our students and schools in session and healthy during the cold and flu season!

Warm Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ben C. Small". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ben C. Small
Superintendent