

# DDS Guidance for Caregivers of Children and Adults with Intellectual Disability Living at Home

(This information was compiled from information provided by CDC and the Massachusetts DPH)

As you are all aware, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is preparing for a H1N1 flu (Swine flu) outbreak this Fall. While there is no need to be overly alarmed, the situation should be taken seriously. If you care for someone with intellectual disability at home be particularly vigilant as often they are unable to express symptoms of illness to you. The most important step is to have the individual vaccinated as soon as it is available. **Individuals with intellectual disability are among those who are considered high priority for receiving the H1N1 vaccine. Check with your child's Health Care Provider (HCP) or your local health department to determine where and when the vaccine can be received.**

There are a number of steps that you can take to help prevent the spread of H1N1 flu.

- 1) **Precautions to take to prevent the spread of H1N1 flu**
  - a. Wash hands frequently with soap and water or use alcohol based gels
  - b. Avoid holding, hugging, kissing, or shaking hands with anyone who has a cold or the flu.
  - c. Avoid touching your nose, mouth or eyes.
  - d. Cough or sneeze into a tissue, or into your elbow instead of into your hands.
  - e. Clean things that are touched often like door handles and telephones.
  - f. Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
  
- 2) **Be aware of the symptoms of H1N1 flu.** They are very similar to seasonal flu. The most common symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people also have diarrhea and vomiting.
  
- 3) **What to do if symptoms develop.**
  - a. If symptoms develop your child's Health Care Provider (HCP) should be contacted. He/she will decide what type of testing and/or treatment is indicated.
  - b. Keep home until fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medications
  - c. Make sure they get plenty of rest
  - d. Keep in bedroom as much as possible away from other household members
  - e. Make sure they drink plenty of fluids
  - f. Be watchful for emergency warning signs that might indicate the need to seek medical attention.
  - g. Contact the HCP immediately if an individual has difficulty breathing, has discoloration in the lips, is vomiting and unable to keep liquids down, has signs of dehydration such as dizziness, absence of urination, or seizures.

For more information regarding H1N1 flu, please refer to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health web site listed below or contact the Department of Public Health at (617) 983-6800. **Massachusetts Department of Public Health Website on influenza:**

<http://www.mass.gov/dph/flu>

