

H1N1 FACT SHEET FOR UTSA SUPERVISORS AND MANAGERS

As the season progresses, we begin to see more stories in the media concerning H1N1, and its potential severity and impact. Many of us already may be dealing with situations related to the influenza strain. It is important for UTSA supervisors and managers to stay informed about the disease and also provide sound guidance and leadership to employees. In the coming months, we may be faced with many challenges such as higher than usual absenteeism, which will test our leadership ability. It is essential that we be creative and innovative in overcoming these challenges to meet the goals, objectives and expectations of our community. Below, you will find H1N1 information and suggested departmental actions that can help minimize the impact of H1N1 on UTSA.

UTSA relies on the advice of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and information provided by the Texas Department of State Health Services and the City of San Antonio Metropolitan Health District for disease prevention and response information. UTSA already has policies in place to address most of the issues that will result from an outbreak of H1N1 in the local area.

Understand the H1N1 signs and symptoms?

- Fever 100° F. or higher with a median temperature of 102° F., and either sore throat or cough
- Gastrointestinal symptoms (nausea, vomiting, diarrhea)
- Similar to seasonal flu symptoms

According to the CDC, what groups are at a higher risk of being impacted by H1N1?

- All people ages 6 months-24 years
- Pregnant women
- Caregivers of children younger than 6 months.
- Health care providers, Target First Responders
- Residents of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities.
- Those ages 25-64 with chronic respiratory ailments, asthma, neurological disorders, diabetes and immunodeficiency

Promote CDC-recommended actions to stay healthy

- Stay informed. Reading this article is an excellent first step but don't stop there. Go to informational Web sites such as www.cdc.gov, www.flu.gov or texasflu.org to stay up-to-date on this evolving situation.
- Influenza spreads person-to-person through coughing or sneezing by infected people, so:
 - Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hands cleaners are also effective.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread that way.
 - Minimize your time with other people who are showing flu-like symptoms.

- Get vaccinated. Get the seasonal flu vaccination, as well as the H1N1 vaccination (with booster) when it becomes available. These are different vaccines and one vaccine will not protect you against the other kind of flu.
- Discuss with your supervisor what accommodations might be required in the event of a departmental outbreak.

Adhere to CDC recommendations for those with flu-like symptoms

- If an employee becomes ill with influenza-like symptoms, the CDC recommends staying home and avoiding contact with other people.
- CDC recommends staying home for at least 24 hours after fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.)
- Stay away from others as much as possible to keep from infecting others. This means the individual should not leave except to seek medical care. Avoid normal activities, to include work, school, travel, shopping, social events and public gatherings.
- If the person has chronic illness or are at high risk for flu complications, the individual should be directed to contact their health care provider or seek medical care. The health care provider will determine whether flu testing or treatment is needed. Underlying medical conditions that often require special attention for avoiding severe complications with flu include asthma and diabetes. If a person is living with a chronic disease, he or she should check with their doctor about whether flu should be a more serious concern.

Understand what your employee will encounter when visiting the doctor

Physicians may vary in the advice they offer according to the particular situation, so expect that your physician's advice may deviate from the following information. However, this should help prepare for a visit to a physician during this flu season.

- Physicians may have special plans for dealing with those who present with flu-like symptoms. For example, he or she may ask that you put on a mask while waiting to be seen or move you into another waiting area to reduce chances of spreading the flu.
- The physician most certainly will perform an initial evaluation that likely will include the following: gathering of history of your past and current illnesses to include current symptoms, taking your vital signs and conducting an examination.
- The physician may decide to perform additional testing. The additional testing, if done, will determine treatment such as antibiotics or antivirals. The physician may decide that the best course of action would be using some over-the-counter medication that might be helpful and appropriate while the patient recovers.
- Important note: Based on the physician's examination and experience, the condition may not warrant an antibiotic or antiviral.
- If the employee is concerned about their physician's recommendations, the individual should ask questions and allow the physician to assist in understanding the illness and his or her recommended individualized treatment plan.

Your employee must bring a doctor's note for H1N1-related absence greater than three days.

- According to Chapter 4.20 of the UTSA Handbook of Operating Procedures, section II, "Sick Leave," *to be eligible to use accumulated sick leave without a deduction in salary during a continuous period of more than three work days, an employee absent due to sickness, injury or pregnancy and confinement shall contact the Human Resources department, leave management section, and provide a doctor's certificate showing the cause or nature of the condition or another written statement, which is acceptable to the university, of the facts concerning the condition. The university may require a doctor's certificate or other written statement of the facts for sick leave without a deduction in salary taken during a continuous period of three or fewer work days.*

For more information, contact the HR leave management department at (210) 458-4250.

How can employees fulfill work commitments to UTSA if affected by H1N1?

- These options must be coordinated and approved by the employee's supervisor and Human Resources. These may not be viable for all employee positions.
 - Flexible work schedules, or "flex time," may be an alternative to fulfill the work commitment to UTSA and to minimize contact with H1N1; however, not all jobs can be adapted to a flexible work schedule. All employees should communicate their interest to flex their work schedule through their immediate supervisors. Decisions on flex time requests will be made in accordance with HOP 4.29, "Hours of work and breaks for staff (non-faculty) employees."
 - While UTSA does not have a telecommuting policy, there are specific practices that have been followed and guidance that can be provided. Supervisors who receive requests from their employees to telecommute should contact HR Leave Management at (210) 458-4250 for guidance. Decisions on telecommuting requests will be based on the critical nature of the function and if the employee obtains medical clearance from their doctor to work from home. Telecommuting applies only to regular, full-time and part-time Classified Exempt and Administrative and Professional (A&P) employees

What should be done if someone in my work area is absent because of flu-like illness?

- Contact the Occupational Health team in Environmental Health, Safety and Risk Management (210) 458-5304 or (210) 458-4420. The office will consult with work groups to provide detailed information and advice about disease prevention measures for the workplace. Note that:
 - Facilities Services housekeepers have been asked to do more frequent cleaning of surfaces that get touched often such as door handles, elevator buttons and handrails.
 - Most flu viruses cannot cause disease after 2-8 hours outside the body; disinfecting a room or work space may mean waiting overnight.

- Each work group is encouraged to take responsibility in controlling disease. This means:
 - Sanitize public-use items often with disposable wipes.
 - Provide hand sanitizer at reception areas and shared spaces.
 - Encourage co-workers to stay home when they're sick.

If a doctor tell an employee the he or she has flu-like symptoms or a co-worker calls in sick with the flu, what should I call it?

- Everything we know about H1N1 indicates that it is no more dangerous than seasonal flu, except that we can expect many more cases to occur in addition to seasonal flu cases. If someone in your office or class is sick, say that, "They are sick." If you know, for a fact, that they have the flu, then say, "They have the flu."

Should household members associated with sick people stay home, too?

- No:
 - An employee with an ill household member may go to work. It is especially important that these employees monitor themselves for illness.
 - Employees with school-aged children may need to stay home to care for children. Employees should review leave policies for flexibility to allow employees to stay home if needed to care for children or other household members.
 - If flu conditions are more severe, CDC guidance for school-aged children is that they should stay home for five days from the time someone in their home became sick. However, this guidance does not apply to adults.

How can I deal with shortages of personnel and equipment and continue my departmental functions?

- Identify critical functions of the department and ensure these functions are completed. Less critical functions could be curtailed or deferred until normal operations resume.
- Cross-train staff to perform essential functions so business operations can continue.
- Establish a process to communicate information to workers and business partners on the latest flu information. Informed employees will respond better and may be willing to do more to help if well informed.
- Personnel shortages may require adjusting work hours or staffing in certain areas.
- Affected employees may be able to utilize telecommuting when staying at home. This should be determined and tested before illness to determine effectiveness.

Important links:

- CDC H1N1 Web site: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>
- Texas Dept of State Health Services H1N1 Web site: www.texasflu.org
- San Antonio Metropolitan Health H1N1 Info Web site: <http://www.sanantonio.gov/health/H1N1.html>
- UTSA H1N1 Web page: <http://www.utsa.edu/today/2009/08/swineflu4.cfm>

By understanding this evolving situation and remaining up-to-date, we are better able to distinguish fact from fiction. Through practicing protective actions, recognition of signs and symptoms of this virus and actions to take if infected we can react as a community to keep ourselves safe and lessen the impact of H1N1. (September 2009)