

Diocese of Dallas

OFFICE OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

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April 30, 2009

Dear Parents:

In light of the current health concerns about the swine flu cases in the Dallas Metroplex, I would like to take this opportunity to inform you about what we are currently doing within the Catholic schools of the Diocese of Dallas and the steps you should take to have a plan for your family in the event the situation worsens.

The safety and health of the students is our utmost concern at all times. We are closely monitoring the situation within our Catholic schools and are gathering information of all the cases of students or staff reporting flu-like symptoms. We continue to be in contact with health officials from the Dallas County Health Department for guidance in order to coordinate our response should a probable or confirmed case occur within one of our schools.

Any student that is sent home with flu-like symptoms or is absent with flu-like symptoms is now required to have a physician's clearance in order to return to school. This measure has been put into place to ensure that any case of the flu is properly evaluated by a medical professional to determine whether the potential for swine flu exists. It is important for you to keep your child at home if he/she develops any flu like symptoms or if you or anyone living in your home develops any flu-like symptoms until an evaluation by a physician has been made.

We have received many questions from parents and staff about the varying description of cases reported in the media. Dallas County health authorities designate confirmed Influenza cases that could be swine flu into three categories:

Suspected Cases – A person has been administered a flu test by a physician and the results confirm Influenza A. When this happens, physicians send the results to county health authorities for further testing. At this level, the person could have the common flu or potentially have swine flu, and further tests are needed.

Probable Cases – County health authorities have tested a person's Influenza A positive results for a flu subtype and the results are unable to be determined. When this happens, county health authorities are unable to rule out swine flu, and the test results are sent to the national Center for Disease Control for further tests. This elevates the case to "probable" for swine flu.

Confirmed Cases – The national Center for Disease Control has tested the results and confirmed the case is a swine flu case.

If a diagnosis of any of our students elevates to “Probable Case” we will immediately dismiss all classes at that school and close the facility for cleaning and disinfection. The parents in that specific school will be notified immediately. There will also be guidance provided to you regarding any additional steps that must be taken with your child and your family physician.

It is important that you and your family begin planning now for any potential closure of the school that your child attends. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) and other health officials recommend that schools closing under these circumstances remain closed for up to 7 days. During this time, it is important that you understand that all of your children remain at home and avoid any mass gatherings, group activities, or other activities with individuals outside of your home. Essentially, what this means is that it is strongly recommended that you not place your child into day-care or another similar setting. It is critical that you plan now for how you will be able to care for your children if this situation occurs. We also recommend that you speak with your employer about your plans.


If any Catholic school closes for a probable or confirmed case, we will cancel all after-school events and activities at that particular school as well as all athletic events sponsored by the Dallas Parochial League for all Catholic schools. Please be aware that bus services may also be affected, because there may be some buses that transport students from several different schools. If this is the case, you will be notified.

We encourage you to continue to practice general health precautions including frequent hand washing, covering the nose and mouth when coughing and/or sneezing, etc.

Thank you for your patience, understanding, and cooperation during this difficult time. We will continue to provide updates to you, through your school, as additional information becomes available or circumstances change.

We pray for the well-being of those afflicted by this illness and for all public health officials as they guide us in eradicating this threat.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sr. Gloria Cain, SSND".

Sr. Gloria Cain, SSND
Superintendent of Catholic Schools