



# BRAZOS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

201 NORTH TEXAS AVENUE • BRYAN, TEXAS 77803-5317

(979) 361-4440 • Fax (979) 823-2275

healthdept@co.brazos.tx.us • www.brazoshealth.org



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## News Release

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For Immediate Release

### H1N1 Afternoon Update

Based on the continued surveillance and constant communication with the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Brazos County Health Department supports the decision to re-open Pebble Creek Elementary. Furthermore, the CDC has revised its initial guidance to school districts in regards to school closures.

The CDC's initial school closure guidance was based on early information from Mexico, which indicated that many previously healthy young adults were hospitalized with rapidly progressive pneumonia (which resulted in respiratory failure). Based on that information, school closures were thought to be an effective option to prevent or lessen the risk of transmission of this new strain of virus.

As a result of our mass patient sampling and epidemiological information gathered, both the CDC and DSHS have determined that disease severity warranted a revision of the school closure guidance, as this strain is not as virulent as once initially believed.

The decision to close any school is never taken lightly, by either the school administration or the local health authority. Much of the decision-making process to close Pebble Creek Elementary was based on yesterday's CDC school-closure guidance/policy. As the CDC has continued to monitor the situation, it has updated its position and guidance today for schools affected by H1N1 to state that school closures are not advised, and further that schools should follow strict infection control measures. Those measures include:

- School closure is not advised for a suspected or confirmed case of novel influenza A (H1N1) and, in general, is not advised unless there is a magnitude of faculty or student absenteeism that interferes with the school's ability to function.
- Schools that were closed based on previous interim CDC guidance related to this outbreak may reopen.
- Students, faculty or staff with influenza-like illness (fever with a cough or sore throat) should stay home and not attend school or go into the community except to seek medical care for at least 7 days even if symptoms resolve sooner.
- Students, faculty and staff who are still sick 7 days after they become ill should continue to stay home from school until at least 24 hours after symptoms have resolved.
- Students, faculty and staff who appear to have an influenza-like illness at arrival or become ill during the school day should be isolated promptly in a room separate from other students and sent home.
- Parents and guardians should monitor their school-aged children, and faculty and staff should self-monitor every morning for symptoms of influenza-like illness.

- Ill students should not attend alternative child care or congregate in settings other than school.
- School administrators should communicate regularly with local public health officials to obtain guidance about reporting of influenza-like illnesses in the school.
- Schools can help serve as a focus for educational activities aimed at promoting ways to reduce the spread of influenza, including hand hygiene and cough etiquette.
- Students, faculty and staff should stringently follow sanitary measures to reduce the spread of influenza, including covering their nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing (or coughing or sneezing into their sleeve if a tissue isn't available), frequently washing hands with soap and water, or using hand sanitizer if hand washing with soap and water is not possible.

For more information, visit [www.brazoshealth.org](http://www.brazoshealth.org) or [www.texasflu.org](http://www.texasflu.org).

*(News media: for more information contact Sara Mendez, PIO, at (979) 361-4440.)*