

Supervisor Responsibilities During a Pandemic

During a campus outbreak of H1N1 influenza or any other communicable illness, supervisors should provide employees with information about symptoms and about the importance of precautionary hygiene measures and self-isolation, should the employee become ill.

Typical influenza symptoms are fever plus a cough or sore throat, but some people with influenza will not have a fever.

To avoid contracting or spreading the virus, public health officials generally advise that employees should wash their hands frequently, preferably with soap and water, or with alcohol wipes or gel if soap and water are not available. They should avoid touching their mouths, nostrils and eyes, and should cough or sneeze into disposable tissues, which should be thrown into a waste receptacle after use. Desks, telephones, and computer keyboards should be cleaned regularly with alcohol wipes, and publicly-used computers, counters, doorknobs, push-plates and other frequently-touched surfaces should be wiped down with greater frequency.

Supervisors should send employees who have influenza-like symptoms or illness home and instruct them to stay away from work and other public places for at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit or above or 38 degrees Celsius or above) or signs of a fever (chills, feeling warm, having a flushed appearance, sweating.) Fever-free means no fever with no fever-reducing medications, such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen.

According to public health officials, symptoms of influenza complications or more severe illness include increased fever, shortness of breath, chest pain or pressure, rapid respiration, bluish skin color, vomiting, dizziness or confusion. In the event a supervisor observes or becomes aware that an employee is experiencing such symptoms, the supervisor may advise the employee that he or she may wish to consider seeking immediate medical attention for the symptoms. Individual employees are responsible for determining whether they desire to seek medical treatment, and nothing in this policy is intended to be construed as medical advice.

Unless they develop such symptoms, public health authorities advise that employees should not ordinarily go to their health-care provider's office, to avoid spreading the virus or other communicable illness. However, employees may want to call their health-care provider when symptoms first appear to see if anti-viral drugs are appropriate for them and to seek other guidance. [In such circumstances, although no doctor's certification will be required, supervisors may require employees to submit a signed statement verifying the reason for their leave upon returning to work.]

Revised September 21, 2009
September 2, 2009