

Harford County Public Schools

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Harford County prepares for onset of flu season

HCPS school nurses hold workshop on flu protocols



Kim Kelly led the discussion on how to set up a seasonal flu clinic.



Harford County Public Schools (HCPS) held a system-wide health services workshop for all school nurses Tuesday to discuss preparations for the oncoming flu season, including seasonal and H1N1 (or “swine flu”) flu viruses.

As part of the ongoing partnership with the Harford County Health Department (HCHD), HCPS Nurse Coordinator Mary Nasuta, RN, teamed up with HCHD Immunization Coordinator Kim Kelly and HCHD Epidemiologist Kurt Seetoo, MPH, to lead sessions on flu guidelines. Among the topics covered were the FluMist^(R) vaccine program, administering vaccinations and flu prevention practices.

HCPS and the HCHD will once again be offering the FluMist^(R) program free of charge to all elementary school children, and new this year, to all middle school students. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) licensed nasal-spray flu vaccine will be administered during the school day to all students who have parent consent. FluMist^(R) is only used to prevent seasonal flu, not the H1N1 virus.

In the event the Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends an H1N1 vaccine for students, school nurses proactively prepared for its administration with demonstrations and discussions on vaccine logistics. Until a vaccine is available, the school system will continue to encourage flu prevention practices, such as proper handwashing, cough and sneeze etiquette and staying home when you are ill.

“We need to push hand hygiene and cough and sneeze etiquette,” said Mr. Seetoo. “It is the best way to keep this virus somewhat under control.”

To help prevent the spread of the H1N1 virus, HCPS will work with parents and guardians to follow the CDC’s recommendation to keep sick children at home. A sick child should not return to school for seven days or until they have been symptom-free for 24 hours, whichever is longer. Common H1N1 flu symptoms are similar to the regular seasonal flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue.

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“We can change the course of this disease - even if slightly - by keeping sick children at home,” Mrs. Nasuta said. “We will be very diligent about the public health aspect of this disease.”

The HCPS Health Services Department, as well as the HCHD, will be monitoring absences and health room visits throughout the flu season. The CDC is regularly updating their recommendations for H1N1 protocols. For up-to-date information, visit www.harfordcountyhealth.com or www.cdc.gov/flu.

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