

September 23, 2009

Dear Parents/Guardians:

As you may have heard, a new influenza virus, called the 2009 H1N1 influenza virus, was first identified in the United States in late April 2009. The virus has caused illness ranging from mild to severe, including hospitalizations and death in adults and children. Many children have gotten 2009 H1N1 infection and there have been large outbreaks in some schools across the country. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices has recommended that children and young adults aged 6 months through 24 years be vaccinated against 2009 H1N1 as soon as the vaccine is available. Other groups recommended to get the first available doses of the vaccine include:

- Pregnant women
- People who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age
- Healthcare and emergency medical services workers
- People ages 25 through 64 years who have certain health conditions such as HIV, diabetes, or heart or lung disease.

Vaccination is the best way to protect your child from this potentially serious disease. The Clinton County Health Department is working with your child's school to give the 2009 H1N1 influenza vaccine to children at school. We will hold vaccination clinics beginning this fall, and your child's school will let you know the specific dates once vaccine is on hand. School staff will send you more information about the disease and the vaccine. They will also send you a form that will include options allowing you to either accept or refuse the vaccination for your child. If you refuse, the vaccination will not be given to your child.

At this time children ages 9 and under are expected to need two doses of vaccine spaced 3-4 weeks apart, while children 10 and above may be only needing one dose. These recommendations are still being considered by the CDC and are subject to change. There will be no cost to you for this vaccine.

If you have any questions about the vaccine or the vaccination clinics, please call The Clinton County Health Department at 618-594-2723 from 8:00 to 12:00 and 1:00 to 4:00.

Please visit www.flu.gov or the CDC's 2009 influenza web site at www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/. Also, please visit www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/parents for information especially for parents. Your child's healthcare provider also can answer your questions about the 2009 H1N1 influenza virus and will be able to give your child the seasonal influenza vaccine and may be able to give your child the 2009 H1N1 vaccine.

Sincerely,

Michael McMillan, Administrator