

## **Ideas for School Closure Letter for Pandemic Flu**

King County School Districts have requested suggestions for content to include in the pandemic flu school closure letter. Listed below are ideas of items you may want to include in your district's closure letter:

### **Statement of empathy and commitment**

- “We know this is a difficult time for our students, families, and community and our hearts go out to those who are ill. The School District is working closely with health officials to respond to the situation and will keep parents updated with any information by \_\_\_\_\_.”

### **Explanation of why schools are closing**

- “The Local Health Officer for Public Health - Seattle & King County has ordered the closure of all public and private schools (pre-schools, day care centers, K-12 schools) as a result of the pandemic influenza outbreak in the United States.”
- “According to Public Health – Seattle & King County, the purpose of closing schools is to limit contact among children to decrease their risk of getting sick and to limit the spread of infection.”
- “Schools may be closed for an extended period of time, up to 3 months.”

### **Specific information about your school district**

- Information about how students can access school work or study on their own.
- Information about what will happen to the school lunch program.
- How your school district will communicate with parents and students, and how they will announce the reopening of schools.
- “If you need to contact school administration for more information, go to this website \_\_\_\_\_ or call this number: \_\_\_\_\_.”

### **What families can do to protect themselves**

- Because pandemic flu is easily spread from person-to-person, it is unsafe for large groups to gather. Public Health officials also advise that children should stay at home and people should not gather in other locations such as shopping malls, movie theaters or community centers.
- Parents can help protect their children and prevent the spread of pandemic flu as they would colds and other flu by taking the following precautions:
  - Teach your children to wash hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds. Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.

- Teach your children to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or by coughing into the inside of the elbows.
  - Teach your children to stay at least three feet from other people.
  - Stay home if you are sick.
- Because so many people may be sick with the flu during a pandemic, public health officials caution that it may be hard to get an appointment at a doctor's office or clinic, or even be seen in a hospital emergency room. They have provided some tips for residents to care for the sick at home:
- Keep the people who are sick with the flu away from those who are not sick.
  - Only one family member should care for the sick individual.
  - Make sure the sick person drinks a lot of liquid (juice, water).
  - Keep the sick person as comfortable as possible. Rest is important.
  - For adults with fever, sore throat and muscle aches, use ibuprofen or acetaminophen. Do not use aspirin in children or teenagers; it can cause Reye's syndrome, a life threatening illness.
  - Keep tissues and a trash bag within reach of the sick person.
  - Be sure everyone in your home washes their hands frequently.
  - Contact a medical facility if the ill individual has a temperature over 102 for several days or experiences difficulty breathing.

Recommendations may change during the course of a flu pandemic. Public announcements will be made through the media or Public Health - Seattle & King County at [www.kingcounty.gov/health](http://www.kingcounty.gov/health)