

—TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE MEMORANDUM—

Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS) – Access and Intake Division

TITLE:	Influenza Precautionary Recommendations for Congregate Sites	NUMBER:	AAA-TA 304
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The Department is issuing this technical assistance memorandum (TA) to provide influenza precautionary guidance and information to assist congregate sites serving older individuals reduce the spread of disease among consumers and staff. The information below was provided, in part, by the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS).

As a reminder, the decision to close a congregate site or modify hours at a site is the responsibility of the service provider’s executive management. The Department does not have the authority to require a congregate site remain open or to close.

Disease Prevention Recommendations. Below are general recommendations to help reduce the spread of the influenza.

- The influenza vaccine should be encouraged for all employees, volunteers, and consumers.
- Staff, volunteers, and consumers should be encouraged to stay home if they are experiencing influenza symptoms and for an additional 24 hours after they are symptom free. Any staff, volunteer, or consumer who becomes ill while at work, should be sent home when possible.
- Consumers should be encouraged to remain home until they are symptom free for 24 hours or seven days, whichever is longer.

Note: Refer to AAA-PI 317, Congregate Meal Site Closure regarding meals for high risk consumers who visit the congregate site.

- If it is feasible, designate a separate room or area of the room for consumers who are without symptoms.
- If a consumer is experiencing a sore throat, cough, or runny nose, ask (and provide) the consumer to wear a mask.
- In accordance with the Texas Food Establishment rules, food employees experiencing persistent sneezing, coughing, or a runny nose that causes discharges from the eyes, nose, or mouth may not work with exposed food; clean equipment, utensils, and linens; or unwrapped single-service or single-use articles.
- Encourage staff, volunteers, and consumers to frequently wash their hands thoroughly with soap for 20 seconds* and water. If possible, use a paper towel to turn off the faucet. *It is suggested hand washing should last the time it takes to say the “Happy Birthday” song, twice.

- Whenever water is not available for hand washing, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. The congregate site should strategically place hand sanitizer throughout the site for staff, volunteers, and consumers.
- Hands should be washed or sanitized immediately after handling dirty linens, cups, utensils, or other objects touched by a person who is symptomatic.
- Staff, volunteers, and consumers who are symptomatic should avoid contact with persons considered “high risk for complications.” If contact can not be avoided, it is recommended persons who are symptomatic wear masks and gloves.

Congregate sites experiencing an unusually high rate of absenteeism due to illness or observe a large number of staff, volunteers, or consumers with flu-like illness may report their concern to the local health department for further investigation.

Additional Information

For more information in preparing for the influenza season, refer to the Centers for Disease Control’s (CDC) *Guidance for Businesses and Employers To Plan and Respond to the 2009 – 2010 Influenza Season* at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/business/guidance/> or go to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Influenza website at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/>.

The information below is provided by DSHS. Refer to www.dshs.state.tx.us/preparedness for the latest information.

Symptoms of Influenza

- Fever greater than 100⁰ **and** cough or sore throat
- Body aches, headaches, chills and fatigue
- Some persons with Influenza A (H1N1) have reported runny nose, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea

Persons at Higher Risk for Complications of Influenza A (H1N1) Virus Infection

- Children younger than 5years old. The risk for severe complications from seasonal influenza is highest among children younger than 2 years old.
- Adults 65 years of age or older
- Persons with the following conditions:
 - Chronic pulmonary (including asthma), cardiovascular (except hypertension), renal, hepatic, hematological (including sickle cell disease), neurologic, neuromuscular, or metabolic disorders (including diabetes mellitus);
 - Immunosuppression, including that caused by medications or by HIV;
 - Pregnant women;
 - Persons younger than 19 years of age receiving long-term aspirin therapy;
 - Residents of nursing homes and other chronic-care facilities.

Information regarding the H1N1 immunization practices can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr58e0821a1.htm>. Refer to www.cdc.gov for current influenza and H1N1 vaccine information.

Additional websites

www.texasflu.org

www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/clinicians/

www.flu.gov

www.pandemicflu.gov/