School Action Steps for Pandemic Planning

The following is a list of important step-by-step actions schools should take before a pandemic influenza outbreak. Such an outbreak may have several cycles or waves so this list may need to be repeated.

➢Create a pandemic flu plan (Use the CDC School Pandemic Flu Planning Checklist in this guide).

➢Work with local health and emergency preparedness officials. They may want to use the schools as a way to disseminate information to families (See Parent Information and Community Outreach section).

➢Train nurses and staff in flu-symptom recognition (See Surveillance section). Remember that a person who is infected does not show symptoms right away. But children who are getting ill may show different behavior than usual, such as eating less or being irritable.

➢Insure that standard surveillance/disease recognition procedures are in place and implemented. (See Surveillance section).

➢Improve the hygiene of students and staff. Use simple non-medical ways to reduce the spread of flu by "cough and sneeze etiquette," clean hands, and clean work areas. (See Parent Information and Community Outreach section).

➢Decide to what extent you will encourage or require children and staff to stay home when they are mildly ill.

➢Identify students who are most vulnerable to serious illness (immune compromised, chronic illness, etc.).

➢Review the health needs of students. Some students may have a greater risk of infections. Encourage those families to talk to their health care provider. Some parents may need to be more cautious in keeping their children out of school.

➢Through consultation with your regional office of education and local authorities, develop alternative learning strategies such as collaborative agreements (television or other local cable stations, teleconferencing, lessons on CDs, etc.).

➢Educate staff, students and parents about: the differences between seasonal flu, bird flu and pandemic flu; best hygienic practices to prevent any sort of flu; what could occur in a pandemic (See Fact Sheets section).