

Dear Parent/Guardian,

We have received reports that there are families in the St. Walter School and Parish that have the H1N1 virus or the flu. As you may know, the flu can be easily spread from person to person. Therefore, we are taking steps to reduce the spread of flu in St. Walter School. We want to keep the school open to students and functioning in a normal manner during this flu season. **But, we need your help to do this.**

I review information and updates from the Centers for Disease Control, Illinois State Board of Education, Cook County Health Department and the Office of Catholic Schools to monitor flu conditions and make decisions about the best steps to take concerning St. Walter School. Currently, we are experiencing a little higher-than-normal absenteeism *for this time of the school year*, but absenteeism is not as high as is typical during the winter (our peak months). We have a maintenance crew that cleans the common areas and the classrooms every evening after school as well as the teachers maintaining clean classrooms.

**If the flu becomes more severe**, we may take additional steps to prevent the spread such as:

- conducting active fever and flu symptom screening of students and staff as they arrive at school;
- making changes to increase the space between people such as moving desks farther apart and postponing class trips;
- keeping school-aged brothers or sisters home for 5 days from the time a household member became sick; and**
- dismissing students from school for at least 7 days if they become sick; upon return the child will have to have a doctor's to return to school.**

For now we are doing everything we can to keep our school functioning as usual. Here are a few things you can do to help.

- **Teach your children to wash their hands** often with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub. You can set a good example by doing this yourself. *Be sure to caution children not to ingest hand sanitizers!*
- **Teach your children not to share personal items** (like drinks, food or unwashed utensils), and to cover their coughs and sneezes with tissues. Covering up their coughs or sneezes using the elbow, arm or sleeve instead of the hand when a tissue is unavailable.
- **Know the signs and symptoms of the flu.** Symptoms of the flu include fever (100°), cough, sore throat, a runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, and feeling very tired. Some people may also vomit or have diarrhea.
- **Keep sick children at home** for at least 24 hours *after* they no longer have fever or do not have signs of fever, without using fever-reducing drugs. Keeping children with a fever at home will reduce the number of people who may get infected. Remember: students missing school for any reason cannot participate in any aspect of the St. Walter athletic program or any other programs—this will prevent the spread of flu to teammates and players from other schools.
- **Do not send children to school if they are sick. Any children who are determined to be sick while at school will be sent home. If your child has the H1N1 flu now or becomes sick, DO NOT concern yourselves with making-up schoolwork!**

Children with this flu are too sick to be concerned about anything but getting well—focus your attention on your child's health. When students return to school, our teachers will work with students to catch-up on only the most critical work; they will not be responsible for the same written work as their flu-free classmates.

For more information, see the attached flyer (parentsfactsheet2.pdf) and visit [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov), or call 1-800-CDC-INFO for the most current information about the flu. I'll continue to keep you posted about our circumstances and share any information from government agencies and/or the Office of Catholic Schools

Sincerely

Mrs. Laura Kennedy  
Principal