

Title: Influenza in the Workplace
Policy Number: 116
Effective Date: July 1, 2009
Revision Date:
Authorized by: Board of Supervisors

Policy:

Influenza is a contagious illness that includes symptoms such as coughing, nasal congestion and discharge, fever, sore throat, headache, body aches and general fatigue. Pottawattamie County realizes that employees with influenza often need to continue with normal life activities, including working. In deciding whether an employee apparently suffering from influenza may continue to work, the County considers several factors.

Comments:

- (1) The employee must be able to perform normal job duties and meet regular performance standards.
- (2) In the judgment of the Department Head, the employee's continued presence must pose no risk to the health of the employee, other employees and customers.
- (3) If an employee disputes the Department Head's determination that such a risk exists, the employee must submit a statement from his or her attending health care provider that the employee's continued employment poses no significant risk to the employee, other employees or customers.
- (4) Employees are reminded that Pottawattamie County sponsors annual influenza vaccinations during the fall. The County also provides paid sick leave to cover absences due to influenza.
- (5) Employees are urged to contact their Department Head or Human Resources regarding any questions about the possible contagious nature of another employee's temporary illness.
- (6) For the protection of all county employees, Pottawattamie County reserves the right to implement advice and/or procedures provided by Public Health Officials in pandemic or severe influenza outbreaks.

STOPPING THE SPREAD OF GERMS AT WORK

How Germs Spread

Illnesses such as the flu (influenza) and colds are caused by viruses that infect the nose, throat and lungs. The flu and colds usually spread from person to person when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

How to Help Stop the Spread of Germs

1. *Cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze or cough.*

Cough or sneeze into a tissue and then throw it away. Cover your cough or sneeze if you do not have a tissue. Then, clean your hands and do so every time you cough or sneeze.

2. *Clean your hands often.*

When available, wash your hands with soap and warm water, then rub your hands vigorously together and scrub all skin surfaces. Wash for 15 to 20 seconds. It is the soap combined with the scrubbing action that helps dislodge and remove germs. When soap and water are not available, alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers may be used. If using a gel, rub the gel in your hands until they are dry. The gel doesn't need water to work; the alcohol in the gel kills germs that cause colds and the flu.

3. *Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.*

Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose or mouth. Germs can live for a long time (some can live for two hours or more) on surfaces like doorknobs, desks and tables.

4. *Stay home when sick & check with a health care provider when needed.*

When you are sick or have flu symptoms, stay home, get plenty of rest and check with a health care provider as needed. Remember: keeping your distance from others may protect them from getting sick. Common symptoms of the flu include:

- Fever (usually high)
- Extreme tiredness
- Sore throat
- Muscle aches
- Headache
- Cough
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Nausea, vomiting and diarrhea

5. *Practice other good health habits.*

Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids and eat nutritious food. Practicing healthy habits will help you stay healthy during the flu season and all year long.

For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/flu or call the CDC Flu Information Line at (800) CDC-INFO.