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Updated H1N1 Influenza Advice for Yukon Schools

WHITEHORSE – School principals and administrators from across Yukon received updated H1N1 influenza information last week about infection prevention, vaccination, cleaning protocols and how to report absenteeism, along with public health advice for ill children or staff, all in preparation for back to school, Health and Social Services Minister Glenn Hart and Education Minister Patrick Rouble announced today.

“Yukon’s medical officer of health, working with Yukon Communicable Disease Control and the communicable disease officer, has prepared information for schools that will help them answer questions from staff and parents about H1N1 and what impact it may have on schools this fall,” Hart said.

“The health and safety of our staff and students is a top priority,” Rouble said, “and we are taking preventative actions to ensure they are protected. In partnership with Health and Social Services we are educating our principals, teachers and administrative staff on how schools can do their part in keeping Yukoners healthy.”

Communicable Disease Officer Rosalyn Robertson met with school principals last Friday to go through the H1N1 communication toolkit and the guidance document on school protocols.

“Schools are being asked to be a little more vigilant,” Hart said. “We are asking them to report high levels of absenteeism and unusual health events to the medical officer of health, as well as to ensure there are adequate hand washing facilities available and an isolation protocol for children who are ill.”

Similar information is being distributed to Yukon College and its campuses throughout the territory.

Hand sanitizers have already been installed in all Yukon schools, as an added infection control precaution. In addition, the respiratory etiquette program for children, Critters, was introduced last year.

Both ministers encourage Yukon residents to use routine precautionary measures at school, at work and at home to prevent infections:

- Stay home if you are ill and limit unnecessary contact with others.
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow or sleeve. If using a tissue to cover your nose and mouth, place the tissue in the garbage.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. When soap and water are unavailable, hand sanitizers may be an acceptable alternative.

If you need advice or are concerned that you may need care, call Yukon Healthline at 811 or visit www.hss.gov.yk.ca or www.fightflu.ca.

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