



Town of Brookline

2009-2010 Workplace Influenza Policy

Local flu conditions will have the potential to affect the Town's ability to provide services to the public. The goal of the Workplace Influenza Policy is to anticipate the impact of seasonal and H1N1 flu and to put in place multiple measures to protect workers and ensure continuity of business operations. This policy also seeks to provide timely and accurate information to managers and employees.

Stay Healthy at Work

You can protect yourself and others by following these key action steps.

1. **Wash your hands frequently** with soap and water for 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand cleaner if soap and water are not available. Be sure to wash your hands after coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose.
2. **Avoid touching your nose, mouth, and eyes.** Germs spread this way.
3. **Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue,** or cough and sneeze into your elbow. Dispose of tissues in no-touch trash receptacles.
4. **Keep frequently touched common surfaces clean,** such as telephones, computer keyboards, doorknobs, etc. Additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning is not recommended.
5. **Get vaccinated against seasonal flu** when the vaccine is available in your area. For information on groups prioritized for *seasonal* flu vaccines see www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/keyfacts.htm.
6. **H1N1 flu vaccine.** If you are at higher risk for 2009 H1N1 flu complications you should contact your medical provider to receive the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine when it becomes available. People at higher risk for 2009 H1N1 flu complications include pregnant women and people with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, heart disease, or diabetes). For more information about priority groups for vaccination, visit www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/vaccination/acip.htm.
7. **Stay Informed** on the seasonal and H1N1 flu, flu clinics and general information on prevention. You can get additional information through the Town's Human Resources Office, the Health Department and various web sites, www.brooklinema.gov, www.Flu.gov, www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu.
8. **Maintain a healthy lifestyle** through rest, diet, exercise, and relaxation and continue to monitor your own health throughout the flu season.

Dealing with Influenza

Sick employees should stay home. People with symptoms of flu-like illness should stay home until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever without use of fever reducing medication. Symptoms of flu include fever (100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or 38 degrees Celsius) **and** cough or sore throat. In addition, symptoms of flu can include runny nose, body aches, headache, tiredness, diarrhea, or vomiting.

Generally, an employee will not be required to provide a doctor's note if he/she is ill with influenza-like symptoms to either validate his/her illness or to return to work. Further, doctor's offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and may not be able to provide such documentation in a timely way.

An employee who is on "doctor's notes" must still call in sick under her department's regular call-in process and provide a doctor's note, as required.

Sick employees at work will be advised to go home. Employees who appear to have a flu-like illness upon arrival or become sick during the work day will be promptly separated from others and sent home by the Department Head.

Employees with sick family members can go to work. Employees who are well but who have an ill family member at home with flu-like symptoms can go to work as usual. Employees may not bring to work any child who has flu-like symptoms. Employees who have sick family members should take care to monitor their health every day and notify their supervisor and stay home if they develop flu-like symptoms.

This policy does not change the use of family sick days under the various collective bargaining agreements.

Planning Ahead - Families with school-aged children. School and public health officials will be focused on preventing the spread of the flu in schools so that schools can stay open. These officials will be closely following the situation and will inform you in the unlikely event that your child's school is closed. However, it is important to plan ahead. Talk to your family now to decide who would care for your child if they become sick. If the school is closed, it is important that students not gather together at another location, but rather stay home to avoid spreading the flu virus to other people.

Surveillance of Influenza and Reporting to the Health Department. The prevalence of Influenza is being closely monitored by the Town and State public health offices. The Human Resources Office will be working with each Department and the Brookline Health Department to detail and report both seasonal and H1N1 Influenza as it occurs within the various Town Departments.

Departments will be responsible for reporting incidences of Influenza to the Human Resources Office, at least once a week. Information collected will include, (a) the number of employees out sick, (b) the number of employees sent home due to flu-like symptoms, and (c) general reason for the sick day (ex. illness, injury, family sick). Each employee who calls in sick will be asked (a) whether he/she has a temperature above 100.4 and (b) whether he/she has a cough or sore throat.

This policy does not change the way the Town treats confidential medical information. An employee's medical information continues to be confidential and will not be divulged except as required by federal or state law.

Employees who are at higher risk for complications of flu. Employees at higher risk for complications of flu, like pregnant women and people with certain chronic medical conditions like heart disease, diabetes and asthma, should check with their health care provider promptly if they become sick. The Town is encouraging these employees to get vaccinated for seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu as recommended when vaccines are available through their health care provider. Early treatment with antiviral medications is very important for people at higher risk for flu complications because it can prevent hospitalizations and deaths.

Final considerations. Employers should be aware that the severity of 2009 H1N1 flu could change rapidly and local public health recommendations to communities and businesses could be revised quickly. Planners should identify sources of timely and accurate information so that they are aware of changes to recommendations and can promptly implement revised or additional measures.