

2009 Fairfax County Public Schools Influenza Pandemic Update Transcript

Unknown 00:00

During this, not necessarily just to brief the school board because you've been receiving some updates throughout the summer, but to also brief our community on our preparedness for probably both seasonal flu as well as the swine flu. So, Fred Ellis

Fred Ellis 00:19

Good evening. For those who don't know me, I'm Fred Ellis. I'm Director of the Office of Safety and Security and I think everyone knows Kim Dockery, the Assistant Superintendent of the Department of Special Services. It's our pleasure to be here tonight to provide you an update on the influenza pandemic involving the h1n1 and again, some information on the seasonal flu virus also. The current situation of what we're looking at in terms of influenza activity, the World Health Organization, as you know, issued a pandemic classification in June of this this year. They have monitored influenza activity in the summ- in the southern hemisphere over the summer, or has been quite active and many countries. Summer camps in the United States have experienced outbreaks of influenza and currently, rates of influenza are higher than normal for this time of year. Some parts of the United States are still having intense activity. For example, some of the universities that have been in the newspapers of late. Based on CDC estimates, Virginia has likely had over 20,000 cases in the state. H1n1 one makes up more than 97% of all influenza A viruses and the CDC anticipates that novel h1n1 viruses will continue. They will co circulate with regular seasonal influenza viruses over our typical influenza season. So we do anticipate more illness than we saw in the spring, more school based outbreaks, because influenza is typically transmitted more easily in the fall and the winter. More communities may be affected, reflecting what a wider transmission with differences in disease burden across the country. This particular virus, the h1n1 virus appears to be more contagious, that seasonal influenza and a younger age group has been affected than seen than seen during seasonal influenza. The illness is presenting with a wide spectrum of illness although most cases seem to be mild and self limited. However, this h1n1 virus has a tendency to cause more severe and lethal infections and people with underlying medical conditions. While the potential severity of this virus really does remain uncertain, because of the virus's tendency to mutate, current severity is unchanged as we speak today, from the spring of 2009. So the situation really is continuing to evolve literally daily with new information on a continual basis. We're really going to have to be very fluid in our approach in dealing with this, as [inaudible] that is is quoted as saying we're going to have to be light on our feet. Flexibility is definitely going to be required as we continue to deal with this event. A collaboration continues with a variety of agencies both locally and nationally. FCPS has had staff attend prior CDC pandemic conferences. We continue to monitor their guidance. We participate and monitor the department education, Virginia Department Health, and of course the Fairfax County Health Department. We also obviously we work with the Fairfax County Office of Emergency Management. In terms of the h1n1 vaccine production, it does continue. The initial volumes, however, look like they're going to be limited. The distribution right now it looks like it will be sometime in October. There's a slight chance that some portion of serum will be

available possibly late September but still a little bit early to say yet. The initial targeting of these groups to receive the initial vaccinations are really based on production and those identifying those groups that are at higher risk for complications, and of course obviously our inoculation planning continues with the Fairfax County Health Department to give you an idea of the tiered group targets of individuals that we would like to get inoculated as soon as the h1n1 vaccine becomes available. Here, we're basically looking at two scenarios originally, one with an expectation or hope rather, that the US would receive or be able to produce about 160 million doses initially. As you've been probably following in the news, that doesn't look like it's going to be the case. It's probably going to be closer to 40 million. So there will be a subset of that targeted, initial targeted group. Even idea that subset will include pregnant women, persons who live with or provide care for infants aged six months or under health care and emergency medical services personnel who have direct contact with patients or infectious material. Children ages six months to four years, children and adolescents aged five to 18 years who have medical complications that put them at higher risk for influenza-related complications. The seasonal flu vaccine is becoming available. I've seen advertisements for Safeway, Walgreens, so it is becoming out in the community. FCPS is providing free seasonal flu shots for employees being coordinated through the human resources department and those are expected to be available sometime in September and localities in different locations are scheduling clinics. Through this fall, all community members are highly encouraged to receive this seasonal flu shot. And to remind folks, there will be basically in terms of the h1n1, it looks like that's going to be a series of two shots. So when we're thinking of flu shots this fall, we're talking three shots. One is the seasonal flu, and then two for the h1n1 when it becomes available.

Kim Dockery 07:07

So we've been talking about protocols for our students. And our first is stay at home if you're ill. Students should remain at home 24 hours after a fever has ended. Students presenting with flu-like symptoms at school will be isolated and supervised. So that's one of the things schools are wrestling with to find a separate space because you still have to have health room for medications and care of injured. But you also want to separate those kids who are exhibiting flu-like symptoms. We've already Mr. O'Neill is already distributed that surgical masks so students who can tolerate that when they're ill and waiting for a parent to pick them up. We have those in the schools already with others available. We're getting ready to send out a keep in touch message to parents so that they'll have more information if their child is one in one of the high-risk populations about working with their own doctor in those situations. And we've also met with the principals of the schools where our high-risk students are. So the students that we have that are more medically fragile and are pregnant teens, we've met with those principals to talk about plans for that those students. Protocol for staff, same thing, stay home, if you're ill, 24 hours after fever has ended. We'll also have no requirement of a doctor notice for flu-like illnesses so that we don't send people to the doctor for those things. Staff that are ill will be asked, you know encouraged to go home and then use of the mask until they're able to leave. We also have information on the website for staff about high-risk populations and a Fairfax all message will be going out to them in the next couple of days. In terms of preventive preventive measures that we met with all the principals on August 11, to give them an update about the situation and talk to them about we know that the isolation does bring up a lot of difficulties because not all schools have the space to do those things. So we're working with schools on an individual basis and trying to support them when needed. We also are encouraging our staff to really use our HD Sims monitoring system. And that is our school

illness monitoring. And that's a daily attendance that's entered and it gives the health department the ability to look at alerts in our system and monitor for different surges in illness. Our cleaning protocols we went over with the principles are cleaning is the routine. There's nothing additional necessary and we're emphasizing hand washing, and putting all of the health curriculum in the first two weeks of school. Liz Payne worked with everyone to really say, that's what we have now, the preventative measures of cover your cough, cover your sneeze and washing your hands. We're also doing a lot of work with Barbara Hunter and working with Laurie Knickerbocker, so that the messaging through our channel 21, and all of the websites to keep in touch, we're always updating people and giving them access to information. In terms of academic continuity, all the schools are also being encouraged to have teachers keep their Blackboard sites update for their personal classes. But in addition, Instructional Services is working on our it was our Blackboard pandemic site, but we're calling it keep on learning and it will only be turned on in a case where you have a number of students that were if we had a lot of students sick at home, or if we had a case where we needed to have portions or populations of school of students that couldn't have access to school. We're also making sure that schools are looking at what they would do for packets and being able to distribute those. A lot of schools started thinking about that in the spring and principals had come up with ideas for how you could have things at the local library, and also places in the cafeteria by grade level where parents could come in to pick up materials. So they are looking at for those students that don't have internet access as well.

Fred Ellis 11:35

In terms of school closures, I know this was a hot topic early in the earlier this year in the spring when school closures were more of a on the table so to speak in terms of responses. The CDC recognizes the social and economic impacts of school closures. So they really are stressing trying to keep schools open as much as possible and are making are allowing localities to make school closure decisions based on what they see. So that school closures or dismissals could affect specific populations of students, they could affect individual schools or it could be a division wide type issue for those. Any of the school closures would be done. After close consultation with the Fairfax County Health Department. After much discussion, it would either be on an epidemiological basis, or on an operational capability basis. And what I mean by that is, for instance is if Mr. Tistadt loses 30 or 40% of his bus drivers, we'd be pretty much out of business. So we would have to think about school closure in such a case. And as Kim mentioned, we did meet with the staff, the principals at those Kilmer, Key, Bryant, Mountain View where they do have some high risk populations there. In terms of emergency management issues, we've been doing several things over the summer. One of which, of course, is updated our pandemic Emergency Operations Plan, which we're required to do every year. That plan does have a continuity of operations component built into it in terms of identifying lines of succession, essential functions, non-essential functions, key personnel, those kinds of things. There's also a request by the state, Virginia Department of Health, to provide daily student and staff absentee data so that they can track absentees across the state and it's my understanding that that has been worked on as we speak, so we can comply with that request. In the event that we do have closures, there are some notification requirements to the Centers for Disease Control in the US Department of Education, which were prepared to do if necessary. With that, entertain any any questions?

Kathy L. Smith 14:10

I have Mr. Center first.

Brad Center 14:15

Thank you. I'm sorry. I don't know if you know the answer this one. If not, you can get back to me. There's a certain percentage of our population that has kinds of immuno deficiencies, and they vary, you know, in great detail. Does this this h1n1 potentially impact that part of our population in any greater, given any greater risk? And if so, are we planning on in our communications alerting folks to that?

Fred Ellis 14:45

Yes, sir. It sure does, actually the list of those who are at a higher risk for complications involved with h1 and want to include those that have chronic pulmonary. including asthma cardiovasc similar except hypertension, renal, cognitive, neurological, neuromuscular, and some of these other medical terms I'm not sure I could pronounce including diabetes, immunosuppression, including that caused by medications or HIV. And in terms of notifications, that was the keep in touch that Kim alluded to earlier that is on the verge of being sent out.

Kim Dockery 15:25

We have about 20,000 students that are on our medical alert list. So we work with the health department, we're sending out this keep in touch message so that parents of those students begin to think about these things. But the health department also really, when we are talking about vaccine, those are the places that they'll be looking first.

Kathy L. Smith 15:49

Mr. Ghuman.

Shawn Ghuman 15:51

I was looking at the preventive measures slide. And I just was wondering if the health department's gonna have any direct communication with students such as assemblies or anything like that protocol like that, if that's gonna happen at certain high schools or elementary schools, middle schools?

Kim Dockery 16:05

I think we asked them, and they'll be interesting. Did you have anything on the morning news shows about wash your hands or prep or health,

Shawn Ghuman 16:11

We had like if you have a cough, cover it. And that was about how much the first day so I don't know if there's anything extend past that.

Fred Ellis 16:18

I don't know if the health department is specifically going to reach out and do some kind of initiatives in the school. We've obviously worked with them for several months now, on making sure our strategies are appropriate. Our posters are fact. We on our website, you can link to the Fairfax County Health Department to see their posters, they actually have posters in Spanish. Schools are encouraged to use

those. And in terms of the messaging that we've done in terms of keep in touch, the announcements, information on our website has all been done in close collaboration with the health department, and of course, you do have the school aid, the school health aides and public health nurses in the schools, but I'm not aware of a specific program.

Shawn Ghuman 17:08

So it's finally based on high school administration to implement anything.

Fred Ellis 17:10

Yes.

Shawn Ghuman 17:11

Okay. Thank you.

Kathy L. Smith 17:12

Ms. Hone.

Martina Hone 17:15

Thank you, Madam Chair, Kim come up to the podium? Because you're both very important to this discussion. I really want to thank you both for having such a clearly laid out plan. This has been an issue that I've been sort of waking up at night going, oh my god, what happens if all the teachers get sick, didn't think about what would happen if all the bus drivers get sick, because of the way that this disease is actually impacting young adults. I'm actually more worried about our staff getting, you know, putting out put out a commission than than our kids who are apparently the kids are actually more resilient except for those with special needs. Instructional continuity. I am particularly concerned about those kids who don't have computer access. I'm pleased to hear that you have a plan. Kids who are students with IEPs or have disabilities, kids that are sort of not sort of caught in the mainstream and their extra needs, how are we going to deal with academic continuity for those kids?

Kim Dockery 18:22

Well, the when we met with the schools that Key, Kilmer, Bryant, that was some of the planning that we did. And for instance, our students that are at ?????? ??????? is not letting the students go into the schools because of the risks. So we're putting more homebound instruction into the into ????????. So we're working within special ed to look at those kinds of things. And, you know, talking with people about how our teachers would be going to students, as opposed to congregating at school,

Martina Hone 18:53

Continuity of learning, and again, trying to get the packets out having the Blackboard plan, and all of those things, requires a lot of self direction from kids and their parents and, and caregivers. I can envision situations where our kids will come back from leave and perhaps will not have been as self directed as they needed to be, or they might have been just too sick to keep up. What's the plan for if any, for when the kids are sort of re-matriculate and you may have a situation where out of 30 kids 10 were out and they're kind of behind.

Kim Dockery 19:33

We talked to principals about that because there's going to have to be flexibility because you could have a school that's not closed, but a group of students that have been out for a period of time. And I think it's another place where we'll be looking at the flexibility of our extended contracts and intervention means intervention and reaching meeting kids needs means whoever needs that at that time.

Martina Hone 19:54

Just because I'm also thinking about the technology and what's available to us.

Kim Dockery 20:01

I think one of the things that we discovered with Project Lift this this summer, is we had a summer reading program and we found that a phone call from either a call-out system or the teachers on extended contracts, engage the kids and had them more likely to increase in their reading skills. So we've learned a lot of things about how we can use technology. And if if we're teachers at our home, we still have access to that technology, or teachers could be at school using some of that technology.

Martina Hone 20:29

And I particularly love that because it's phones, not computers. And when you look at disparities in computer usage, it's still exist. Phones are, especially even cell phones, frankly, the ability to even send a text message to a parent or a child to remind them to do their work, I did not know that we were doing that. So I am delighted to using

Kim Dockery 20:51

We're using that this summer and using their call out system to say the book is coming in. Don't forget to use your reading strategies and answer the postcard. So that was going on all summer in over 100 schools.

Martina Hone 21:03

And I will love to hear a report on that another time. So thank you.

Kathy L. Smith 21:09

Ms. Wilson.

Tessie Wilson 21:10

Thank you. A couple of things I am, by the way, might keep in touch is signed up, I get the voicemail messages from all the schools in my district about don't forget that. It really is very powerful. Because all of a sudden, it's like who's calling from that number? And it's like, don't forget, so it is a really great thing. Before I ask my question, you and I know, but you might tell the rest of the board and the viewing audience what ????? is.

Kim Dockery 21:37

it's our nursing home for for hi-needs students. Thank you.

Tessie Wilson 21:44

If there is one message that we send home to parents tonight, that is that parents have got to be prepared if the school calls and says your child is sick, come get them. That is going to be a huge issue for single parents, for parents where both child work. Yeah, for families where both parents work, to be able to have a plan to be able to come home, pick up that child and then have daycare arrangements or arrangements for that child for the duration of the illness, which is normally about five days. I think there are going to be a lot of parents who are going to get that phone call, and are going to be shocked about the fact that they have to come get their child out of school and they have got to make those arrangements. And anything we can do to send that message home again and again and again, I think is going to be worthwhile. In talking to some of my principals over the summer, they've told me that there have been cases not with the h1n1 virus, but when they call a parent to say your child is sick, a parent has said sorry, I'm at work, you'll just have to hold the child until I can come home at the end of the day. And this is gonna be a huge problem for schools. I mean, somebody was saying that their alternative plan is to turn the library into the clinic if they have more kids who come down sick during the day than the clinic can handle. That is probably my biggest concern through all of this is to tell the parents how important it is to have that backup plan in place. And I can tell you from not being able to raise my arm, a whole lot more than that, that I've already gotten my-

Kim Dockery 23:29

Your seasonal flu shot.

Tessie Wilson 23:30

My seasonal flu shot, but I am an at risk population. So it's one thing I do. But-

Kim Dockery 23:35

To add to that is to have all the phone numbers updated to current so that we can call and we can reach you. And for every crisis situation, family need to have a lot of backup plans. We saw in the spring that families in some districts actually banded together. So they had sick kids and they would do somebody would come and pick them up and you could share that care. We need to have multiple plans.

Kathy L. Smith 24:03

Ms. Strauss.

Jane Strauss 24:06

There was a press release, just before the meeting started that indicated that the flu vaccine may be effective was just one inoculation. That came out just as our meeting was starting, but we'll wait to see whether or not that actually proves to be the case. I know what they're saying is that if it's effective as just one inoculation, the vaccine will go farther but we don't know yet. But just that's out there in the chattering class. The one question that I have and curious, as this comes through, do we have any idea of the timeframe how long it would last? Because isn't it Montgomery, one of the community colleges in Maryland is experiencing a huge wave coming through in other words, will this last a month, two months, three months all year long. Do we have any idea?

Fred Ellis 24:52

Oh, historically, they've come in waves. So for instance, we've seen the first wave in the spring. The second wave we are again, we're anticipating this fall. In terms of the length of those waves, maybe anywhere from two to three, four months. Could be quite a while.

Jane Strauss 25:10

So, so then are we to expect that I mean, we're a large county, a large school division, it'd be nice if as it comes through, you know, we sort of have a two-month period and we're done. But is that not I can see him shaking. That's not necessarily what happened. We may be struggling with this until it all passes the Northern Hemisphere.

Fred Ellis 25:27

We really could. Viruses are particularly adept at mutating. This one is particularly contagious, and infectious, so as long as it has a host it's likely to live in a community, particularly during the cold seasons, where the transmissibility seems to be much easier for viruses. So I think it's quite plausible to expect a pretty rough road. But if anyone professes to be able to look down the road and tell you exactly what to expect, I would submit that they very much mistaken.

Jane Strauss 26:08

So many back-up plans.

Fred Ellis 26:10

Yeah, and um-

Kim Dockery 26:13

The seasonal that's why we really need people to do the seasonal because if they mix, then we have a whole different situation.

Fred Ellis 26:21

Yeah, the viruses tend to intermix and trade their RNA. That's what they do very well. So we need to be taking this very seriously. And I hadn't heard that news thing i'll be anxious to hear that goes back to the beginning slide in terms of evolving flexibility and fluidity associated with this event.

Kathy L. Smith 26:48

I have Mr. Raney.

James Raney 26:52

Thank you. A certain percentage of the students in Fairfax County are homeschooled. Do we have any plans? Or does the Health Department have any plans to reach out to the students and parents involved in homeschooling?

Kim Dockery 27:05

The health department has townhall meetings going on right now. So they're meeting all over giving updates to the community members. The vaccine is available to those people that are in the categories. So we will have private health providers that will be providing vaccine, we will have health department

providing that vaccine, and homeschoolers can access themselves of those sources just the way we will have school people doing. So the townhall meetings are how they're communicating with community members who are not in Fairfax schools.

Kathy L. Smith 27:45

Thank you very much for that informative presentation. And please remember to tell your kids to wash their hands, cough their elbows and let's take care of each other. Thank you. Thank you very much.