

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

HARRISBURG

HEALTH DEPUTY SECRETARY
MICHAEL HUFF, RN

EDUCATION DEPUTY SECRETARY
MICHAEL WALSH

DATE: October 30, 2009

SUBJECT: Excused Absences for Influenza Like Illness (ILI) and
Clearance to Return to School

TO: Superintendents/Chief Executive Officers

FROM: Michael Huff, RN
Health Deputy Secretary

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Michael Walsh
Education Deputy Secretary

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Pennsylvania Department of Education regulations at 22 Pa Code, Chapter 11 (Student Attendance), Subsection 11.41 (School District Policies and Rules) require schools to have written policies and procedures that address and implement attendance and excusal. To that end, many schools have developed policies that include a requirement for students to have medical documentation for absences due to illness for three or more days. This documentation must provide evidence of an excused absence and clearance to return to school.

Due to the H1N1 pandemic and increased incidence of influenza like illness, families of ill students are requesting medical excuses from their child's primary care provider in order to have an excused absence and return to school, in compliance with school policy. Inquiries have been received by the Departments of Health and Education from health care providers indicating they are being inundated with requests for medical excuses while attempting to provide immunizations for H1N1 and seasonal flu as well as caring for ill patients, putting a strain on their operations.

The Departments of Health and Education would like to bring this issue to your attention and encourage you to consider adjusting your policies to make accommodations so that students who were absent for ILI be permitted to return to school without the normal medical documentation.

Should you have questions, contact the Department of Health at either c-paschool@state.pa.us or call your Health District School Health Consultant at 1-877-PAHEALTH.