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Dear Parents:

As you may have heard, a new influenza virus, called the 2009 H1N1 influenza virus, was first identified in the United States in late April 2009. The virus has caused illness ranging from mild to severe, including hospitalizations and deaths in adults and children. Many children have gotten 2009 H1N1 infection and there have been large outbreaks in some schools across the country. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices has recommended that children and young adults aged 6 months through 24 years be vaccinated against 2009 H1N1 as soon as the vaccine is available. Other groups recommended to get the first available doses of the vaccine include:

- o Pregnant women
- o People who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age
- o Health care and emergency medical services workers, and
- o People ages 25 through 64 years who have certain health conditions such as HIV, diabetes, or heart or lung disease.

Vaccination is the best way to protect your child from this potentially serious disease. The Cape May County Department of Health is working with your child's school to give the 2009 H1N1 influenza vaccine to children at school. We will hold vaccination clinics this fall, and your child's school will let you know the specific date once vaccine is on hand. Attached is information about the vaccine and a parental consent form that allows you to either accept or refuse the vaccination for your child. If you do not consent, the vaccination will not be given to your child. Parents are welcome to accompany their child when he or she is vaccinated. You must return a completed consent form to your child's school for them to receive the H1N1 flu vaccine in school.

Children less than 10 years of age need two doses of vaccine spaced about 3 weeks apart. The Department of Health will return to the elementary schools for children who need the booster dose. There will be no cost to you for this vaccine. Depending on the availability of vaccine and your child's medical history, your child will receive either FluMist, a live intranasal vaccine that is sprayed into the nose, or an inactivated injected vaccine (refer to Vaccine Information Statements for more information).

If you have any questions about the vaccine or the vaccination clinics, please call: 463-6581 from 9 AM to 4 PM. Please visit the CDC's 2009 H1N1 influenza web site at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/> and also <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/parents> for information especially for parents. Information on County clinics can be found at <http://www.cmchealth.net>. Your child's health care provider also can answer your questions about the 2009 H1N1 influenza virus, can give your child the seasonal influenza vaccine, and may be able to give your child the 2009 H1N1 vaccine.

Sincerely,

Kevin L. Thomas, MA, HO
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