

## For Immediate Release

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### **Governor Kaine Announces Expanded H1N1 Call Center Support – Increase Coincides With Opening of Schools –**

**RICHMOND** --Governor Timothy M. Kaine today announced that the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) is expanding its call center to handle questions that Virginians may have about the novel influenza A (H1N1) virus. The toll-free number is 1-877-275-8343 and will be answered during state business hours. The department will adjust hours as necessary to accommodate call volume. Virginians also are able to ask questions via e-mail through the VDH home page at [www.vdh.virginia.gov](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov). State Health Commissioner Karen Remley, M.D., MBA said the call center's increased operations coincide with the opening of public schools across the state this month.

"As students return to school in the coming weeks, Virginia is preparing for increased public awareness of the novel H1N1 virus--and a greater focus by concerned parents on protecting our children from the potential dangers of the virus," Governor Kaine said. "Our Health Department has remained vigilant in following the impact of the virus and will continue to make information easily available."

The novel H1N1 virus has differed significantly from the seasonal flu in its effect upon school children and young adults. This population has contracted the H1N1 virus in higher numbers than usually is seen with the seasonal flu.

An important message for parents of school children as well as faculty and school staff is to stay home if they have novel H1N1 symptoms including fever, cough, sore throat or fatigue. A person with such influenza-like illness should stay home until they have been without a fever for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medicine. Infected adults and children still can be contagious even after they begin to feel better. Commissioner Remley also urged families to have an emergency care plan in the event a child is sent home from school due to illness while parents are at work.

The call center is part of a federally-funded program developed by the health department to prepare for and respond to the novel H1N1 virus. In addition to public education and outreach activities, other aspects of the state's program involve disease surveillance and laboratory testing, community mitigation, antiviral distribution, vaccination (including expanded use of the state's immunization information system) and enhanced coordination of the state's health care delivery capabilities.

"Every Virginian has a role to play in protecting our population and containing the spread and impact of this disease," Commissioner Remley said. As schools begin opening across the Commonwealth, the Commissioner urged parents to:

- Teach children good cough and hand hygiene etiquette. This includes covering coughs and sneezes with tissues, coughing and sneezing into the inside of the elbow and properly discarding used tissues. Hands should be washed frequently with soap and water and hand washing should last for at least 20 seconds. Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself. If hands are not visibly soiled, hand sanitizers containing at least 60 percent alcohol are also effective.
- Vaccinate children and yourself for seasonal flu early and be sure to also vaccinate you and your child against novel H1N1 once a separate novel H1N1 flu vaccine becomes available.
- Monitor yourself and your child for flu-like symptoms which include fever (over 100 degrees Fahrenheit), feverishness, cough, or sore throat. Some people also experience vomiting or diarrhea with novel H1N1 flu.
- If you suspect that you or your child is getting the flu, stay home from work and school and avoid contact with others so the virus does not spread.
- Plan now for your children's care if you or they should become ill with the novel H1N1 virus. If this happens, you or your child might be asked to stay home from work or school for at least 24 hours after resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medicines. People who work in a healthcare setting may be asked to stay home a full week after symptoms start. Talk to other family members, friends or neighbors about helping with child care or possibly sharing care in such a situation. Consider

now who might be able to pitch in and help you. Be sure to have a family plan that includes having adequate food and supplies on hand to decrease your need to be out in public should someone get sick. .

- If symptoms worsen or cause concern, contact your doctor's office by telephone for advice before arriving there in person.
- Stay informed. We encourage you to monitor the CDC Web site (<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>) and that of the Virginia Department of Health (<http://www.vdh.virginia.gov>) and Virginia Department of Education (<http://www.doe.virginia.gov>) for additional resources and the most current recommendations.

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