

School Dismissal Monitoring

Revised Protocol Overview

July 30, 2009

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the U.S. Department of Education (ED), in collaboration with state and local health and education agencies and national non-governmental organizations, are implementing a school dismissal monitoring system for the 2009-2010 school year. This monitoring system will generate highly-accurate, real-time, national summary data daily on the number of school dismissals and the number of impacted students and teachers. The system will be activated August 3, 2009.

Two data sources will be used: (1) daily, systematic searches of media reports and (2) direct reports from schools and school districts.

The daily searches for media reports will be conducted and analyzed at CDC. All media reports will be confirmed. Most confirmations will occur by reviewing school and school district Websites or by contacting state health and education agencies. Only if no other option is available will schools or school districts be contacted directly.

Direct reports from schools and school districts will be handled in two ways. States with a school dismissal monitoring system already in place at the start of their 2009-2010 school year, can provide a list of dismissed schools to CDC. Requirements for the state-based systems are that they can generate and report to CDC by 10:00am (local time) daily highly-accurate, real-time data on school dismissals for both public and private schools grades K-12. CDC will provide one-on-one technical assistance to any state considering such a system for the 2009-2010 school year and jointly determine with the state how best to share data.

If a state does not have a sustainable school dismissal monitoring system that has the characteristics described above, then schools, school districts, and local health departments will be asked to use a common electronic reporting form to report school dismissals to CDC and state agencies. This form requires only the name and zip code of the school or school district, the date they first dismiss students, and the date they plan to re-open. Electronic submission of the form via the Web or email will go simultaneously to the state and CDC. CDC requests one email address per state be provided for this purpose.

CDC, ED, the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO), the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE), the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), and many national education organizations will help promote school dismissal reporting in a variety of ways such as communicating the value of school dismissal monitoring, promoting the use of the common reporting form by local education agencies, posting a link to the reporting form on their Website, and encouraging local education agencies to collaborate with local health agencies in their communities prior to and during school dismissals. In addition, ED and CDC will support use of the school dismissal monitoring reporting form in novel H1N1 virus communications.

ED and CDC will release only national summary data each afternoon. These reports will provide the total number of dismissed schools nationwide, the total number of students and teachers impacted, and a list of the states in which school dismissals have occurred.

School Dismissal Monitoring

Revised Qs and As - July 30, 2009

1. Why was the system proposed?

During the spring 2009 H1N1 outbreak, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) received numerous daily requests about the overall number of school dismissals nationwide and the number of students and teachers impacted and recognized the importance of having a mechanism in place to collect this information and gauge the impact of the outbreak. No system existed to monitor school dismissals. ED and CDC expect similar requests if more flu-related dismissals occur during the 2009-2010 school year.

2. Why is it important to monitor school dismissals at the federal level?

To fully understand how schools are responding to CDC guidance (regardless of whether the guidance is to keep schools open or closed) and for overall situational awareness it is important for CDC, ED, and other federal agencies to have real time summary information on school dismissals nationwide. Further, it is not clear that all 50 states could put their own real time, highly accurate system in place prior to school starting as early as August 3rd and sustain it daily for the entire school year.

3. What is a school dismissal?

A school dismissal will be defined as any instance of a public or private school with any of grades K-12 that dismissed all students (but not staff) for 1 or more days and any instance when an entire school building with any of grades K-12 was completely closed to all students and staff in response to a confirmed or suspected case(s) of novel influenza A (H1N1) infection; an unusually high number of student or teacher absences due to influenza-like illness (ILI) that interfered with the school's ability to function; community or administrative interest in cleaning and sanitizing school facilities regardless of the presence of a confirmed or suspected case of novel influenza A (H1N1) infection or ILI among students and staff; or any other aspect of a community's response to the novel influenza A (H1N1) virus.

4. How will school dismissals be monitored?

Two data sources will be used: (1) daily, systematic searches of media reports and (2) direct reports from schools and school districts.

The daily searches for media reports will be conducted and analyzed at CDC. All media reports will be confirmed. Most confirmations will occur by reviewing school and school district Websites or by contacting state health and education agencies. Only if no other option is available will schools or school districts be contacted directly. Direct reports from schools and school districts will be handled in two ways. States with a school dismissal monitoring system already in place at the start of their 2009-2010 school year, can provide a list of dismissed schools to CDC. Requirements for the state-based systems are that they can generate and report to CDC by 10:00am (local time) daily highly accurate, real-time data on school dismissals for both public and private schools grades K-12. CDC will provide one-on-one technical assistance to any state considering such a system for the 2009-2010 school year and jointly determine with the state how best to share data.

If a state does not have a sustainable school dismissal monitoring system that has the characteristics described above, then CDC, ED, the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO), the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE), the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), and many national education organizations will encourage schools and school districts to use a common electronic reporting form to report school dismissals to CDC and state agencies. This form requires only the name and zip code of the school or school district, the date they first dismiss students, and the projected date they plan to re-open. Electronic submission of the form via the Web or email will go simultaneously to the state and CDC. CDC requests one email address per state be provided for this purpose.

5. How will schools, school districts, and local public health agencies report directly to CDC and state agencies?

A common reporting form (attached) has been created that requires only the name and zip code of the school or school district, the date they first dismiss students, and the projected date they plan to re-open. School districts and local public health agencies may complete this form via the Web (www.cdc.gov/FluSchoolDismissal), email (FluSchoolDismissal@cdc.gov), or fax (770-488-6156). All Web and email submissions will be sent simultaneously to CDC and a designated state agency. All faxed submissions to CDC will be emailed as a PDF file to a designated state agency.

6. How should states with their own school dismissal monitoring system submit reports of school dismissals to CDC?

States with their own school dismissal monitoring system that have the characteristics described above, should submit the list of dismissed schools each morning (preferably by 10:00am (local time) daily) to CDC in whatever electronic format (preferably Excel) they have available. The individual school or school district names, zip codes, the dates the schools are dismissed, and the projected dates schools will re-open are requested.

7. Will CDC confirm media reports of school dismissals?

Yes. All media reports will be confirmed. Most confirmations will occur by reviewing school and school district Websites or by contacting state health and education agencies. Only if no other option is available will schools or school districts be contacted directly.

8. What information will CDC and ED release?

CDC and ED will release around 3:00pm (eastern time zone) each day a summary of the total number of schools dismissed nationwide, the total number of students and teachers impacted, and a list of states in which school dismissals have occurred. Even though school dismissal data are not sensitive and do not require the same protections provided for other types of public health and education data, CDC and ED will not release the number of dismissed schools, students, or teachers per state or the names of dismissed schools or school districts. Requests for this information will be directed to the state public health and education agencies. CDC is discussing with our partners how best to share our list of school dismissals.

9. How will CDC determine the number of impacted students and teachers?

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Common Core of Data and the NCES Private School Universe Survey provide a database of all public and private schools with any of grades K-12 in the U.S and is an authoritative source on the characteristics of schools and school districts nationwide. This database will be the source of information on the number of impacted students and teachers.

10. How will local public health agencies be encouraged to report school dismissals?

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) will communicate the value of school dismissal monitoring, promote use of the common reporting form by local health departments, and encourage local health departments to collaborate with local education agencies in their communities prior to and during school dismissals.

11. How will local education agencies be encouraged to report school dismissals?

Many national education organizations will help communicate the value of school dismissal monitoring, promote the use of the common reporting form by local education agencies, post a link to the reporting form on their Website, and encourage local education agencies to collaborate with local health agencies in their communities prior to and during school dismissals. In addition, ED and CDC will support use of the common school dismissal monitoring reporting form in novel H1N1 virus communications.

12. How will CDC and ED use the data on school dismissals?

CDC, the Department of Health and Human Services, and ED will use the summary data to fully understand how schools are responding to CDC guidance (regardless of whether the guidance is to keep schools open or closed) and for overall situational awareness. CDC and ED will not ask individual schools or school districts to respond to any additional requests for information or to participate in any surveys or research as a result of reporting a school dismissal.

13. Is it possible for CDC and state agencies to receive direct reports of a school dismissal from more than one source in a community?

Yes. Since all communities are different CDC has purposely built redundancy into the monitoring system to provide multiple opportunities for reporting in a timely way that works for each community.

14. Who will CDC communicate with in each state about school dismissal monitoring?

CDC requests that each state provide complete contact information for one person who will serve as the school dismissal monitoring lead.

15. How long will this school dismissal monitoring system be in place?

CDC and ED hope that this school dismissal monitoring system will only be needed for the 2009-2010 school year.

16. Whom should you contact at CDC about school dismissal monitoring?

Contact Laura Kann, Ph.D., Chief, Surveillance and Evaluation Research Branch, Division of Adolescent and School Health, CDC at 770-488-6181 or LKK1@cdc.gov.