

Hello Colleagues:

There is no escaping that flu season has begun. Of course there is heightened awareness this year because of the focus on the H1N1 virus. Following are some important points you need to know.

There are no known diagnosed cases of H1N1 on the Allan Hancock College campus as yet. Let me clarify that the CDC and Santa Barbara County Health have stopped pursuing widespread H1N1 testing. Only individuals with influenza-like illness who are seen in emergency rooms or who are hospitalized are tested for H1N1. All other cases, H1N1 included, are being treated as a typical flu.

Santa Barbara County Health has created a new hotline, 1-888-722-6358, which is quite helpful to students and any others who have specific questions. It is “live” 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday; at other times callers can leave a request for a call back, and Spanish-language assistance is available.

The college has formed a working group to address the many issues surrounding the H1N1 flu. We are continuing to promote healthy protocols such as frequent hand washing, coughing into your elbow or sleeve, etc. We are also looking at suggestions from the Chancellor’s office regarding how to best address unusual levels of absenteeism for both students and staff, and to identify various “triggers” to monitor in order to institute specific responses (such as limiting public events, providing alternate class assignments, etc).

We have created a comprehensive web page that houses all AHC flu information and links to valuable CDC, Santa Barbara County Health and other related agencies. Go to the college homepage and click the black “Fight the Flu” icon.

As the district finalizes a plan to address pandemic-related issues that may arise with the H1N1 flu, I want to make you aware of several actions and opportunities to stay and keep healthy.

- Continue to wash your hands often. As a second option, hand sanitizers have been placed in strategic locations around campus in the physical fitness lab, library, Academic Resource Center, Computer Resources Center and the Student Center on the Santa Maria campus; and in the Lompoc Valley Center library and administration/financial aid offices.
- When dates are firm, we will announce vaccine clinics for students and staff for the H1N1 shots.

Faculty: please be aware of potentially sick students in your classes. Symptoms include fever/cough/headache. CDC guidelines specify that those who are sick should “self isolate” (stay home) until 24 hours after the last sign of fever (without aid of fever reducing medication). Please encourage your students to do so if needed, and work with them regarding assignments, etc. Do not hesitate to refer them to Health Services for a confidential evaluation.

Be assured that we are monitoring the situation and will keep you informed.