Preventing and Managing Influenza in Childcare Settings
2018-2019 Season

**WHAT IS FLU?**
Flu is the common name for the illness caused by the influenza virus. It is a respiratory illness that can be spread easily from person to person and can cause severe illness and life-threatening complications.

**FLU SYMPTOMS**
- Fever (≥100°F under arm, 101°F orally or 102°F rectally)
- Cough
- Sore Throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Body Aches
- Headache
- Chills
- Fatigue
- Vomiting and diarrhea

**SPREAD OF THE FLU**
Flu is spread from person to person when someone sick with the flu coughs or sneezes. Flu can also be spread when a person touches something that has the flu virus on it and then touches their nose or mouth. A person will develop the flu about 2 days after contact with the flu virus. People with flu can spread the virus 1 day before they show any signs of illness and for about 5 days after they start feeling ill.

**TREATMENT FOR THE FLU**
Generally, people with the flu should stay at home, rest, and drink plenty of fluids. Over-the-counter medicine may be used to relieve flu symptoms (e.g., acetaminophen for fever). Antiviral medications such as Relenza or Tamiflu, are medicines prescribed by a doctor to treat or prevent the flu.

**PREVENTING FLU IN CHILDCARE SETTINGS**
- **Vaccination.** The best way to prevent the flu is to get vaccinated. Everyone over 6 months of age should be vaccinated annually for the flu, especially children 6 months to 19 years old and anyone who cares for children younger than 5 years old. Children 6 months through 8 years old who have not received two doses of the influenza vaccine since July 1, 2010 require two doses of vaccine administered at least 4 weeks apart.
- **Hand Washing.** Children and childcare providers should wash their hands regularly, especially before meals and feedings, after wiping a child's nose or mouth, after touching objects soiled with saliva or mucus, after diaper changes, and after toileting. Teach children to wash their hands for 15-20 seconds (long enough to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice). Alcohol-based hand sanitizers should only be used when soap and water are not available and hands are not visibly dirty.
- **Cover Your Cough.** Teach children and staff to cover their mouths and noses with a clean tissue or to use their inside elbow when they cough and sneeze. Tissues should be discarded after a single use.
- **Keep Childcare Center Clean.** Clean toys, surfaces, and commonly shared items at least daily. Use an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered disinfectant and follow label instructions exactly. If using store brand chlorine bleach, mix ¼ cup of chlorine bleach with 1 gallon of cool water. Keep all cleaning products out of reach of children.
- **Monitor Children for Illness.** Observe all infants and children for illness. If a child develops a fever or other concerning signs of illness they should be separated from other children and sent home. Advise the parent to contact the child's doctor. If there is a cluster of illness within the childcare center, the health department should be notified.
- **Stay Home When Ill.** Ill children and staff should stay home and away from others when they are sick with flu symptoms. Generally, children can return to the childcare center once they are fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medications (e.g., acetaminophen).