



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

**News Release**

**LINDA LINGLE**  
GOVERNOR

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CHIYOME LEINAALA FUKINO M.D.  
DIRECTOR  
Phone: (808) 586-4410  
Fax: (808) 586-4444

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**DOH INVESTIGATES FIRST CLUSTER OF FLU CASES AMONG  
SCHOOLCHILDREN ON O`AHU**

***Parents Urged to Get Children Vaccinated***

HONOLULU – The Hawai`i State Department of Health is investigating a cluster of influenza (flu) illnesses reported from a small private school on Oahu. Testing performed by the State Laboratories Division has identified influenza A as the cause of illness among two students at the school, one in first grade and one in kindergarten. A third child, who is a younger sibling of a student at the school, was also found to be positive for influenza A infection. The flu illnesses began in late August. Several other children at the school were reportedly sick, including one with pneumonia, around this time period but specimens were not available for laboratory testing.

“These children were pretty sick, with high fevers, sore throat, and cough that kept some of them out of school for as long as a week” said Dr. Paul Effler, State Epidemiologist.

“Fortunately, this appears to have been fairly limited, but it is a clear reminder that schoolchildren are at risk of getting sick from influenza viruses.”

Flu is a serious illness that affects everyone and can be spread especially well in the school setting. Schoolchildren have been found to have high illness attacks rates from seasonal flu each year. While Hawai`i can see flu illnesses sporadically throughout the year, the onslaught of infections usually occurs during the winter months, between December and March. There are some indications that the coming flu season may be more severe than in the past.

More

“This is exactly the type of situation we hope to prevent with the ‘Stop Flu at School’ program through which children can get a free influenza vaccination at school beginning next month,” said Effler. “We urge parents will take the time to read and return the consent form so we can get as many of Hawai`i’s school kids protected as possible. Let’s keep them healthy and keep them in school.”

Parental consent forms for the program were distributed over the past two weeks through participating schools. Parents have until this Friday, September 7, 2007 to return the flu vaccination consent forms if they would like their child to get a free flu immunization through the Stop Flu at School program. Translated materials are also now available at schools to help parents complete the release forms.

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For more information contact:  
Janice Okubo  
Communications Office  
Phone: (808) 586-4442