



AdvanceMed Hanford

Occupational Health Services

October 29, 2009

SUBJECT: Return To Work after Influenza – AMH Position Statement

Increasing numbers of workers have been infected with the H1N1 2009 pandemic influenza virus, most having mild to moderate symptoms - fever, cough, sore throat, headache, body aches and pains - that last from three to seven days and resolve without specific treatment. Most workers are ready to go back to work shortly thereafter, although some may experience a lingering cough, fatigue and weakness for weeks.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other medical authorities have stated that most flu sufferers should be assumed non-contagious if 1) fever has been less than 100^o for 24 hours, non-medicated and 2) at least five days have passed since the onset of the illness and 3) cough is improving. However, some virus can persist in respiratory secretions for a week or longer after fever has resolved, and all returning workers should practice good cough and hand hygiene after returning to the workplace.

Nationwide, the healthcare system is experiencing heavy loads of patients due to the H1N1 pandemic; many who seek medical care would be better served by staying home and practicing self-care. Unnecessary visits to health care facilities take care away from those who need it and also expose the visitor to other infectious agents. Likewise, it is not necessary to get a health professional's evaluation or "doctor's note" to return to work once the worker feels well enough and meets the non-contagion criteria to do so, as long as there are no other medical issues for which (s)he should be evaluated.

On October 24, 2009, President Obama declared the H1N1 2009 Influenza Pandemic a National Emergency. This, in part, allows lifting of certain federal requirements by healthcare facilities. At Hanford, the policy of obtaining a "return-to-work" evaluation and written authorization to return to work if a worker is absent for more than five (5) days is applied at the discretion of the Site Occupational Medical Director per 10 CFR 851 Appendix A.8(g)(2)(iv). AMH concurs with the CDC recommendations and effective immediately this letter serves as the medical evaluation required by 10 CFR 851 Appendix A.8(g)(2)(iv) for workers absent due to influenza. This allows the worker who meets the criteria listed above to return to work without obtaining a doctor's note or requiring an additional AMH evaluation. This should *in no way* discourage a worker from obtaining an evaluation if (s)he feels the need for it, This letter remains in effect until May 1, 2010, depending on the status of the pandemic at that time. **Note: This does not apply to HRP-certified individuals, who must still report in person to AMH before being allowed to return to normal duties.**

If there is any question as to the worker's readiness to return to work which is not addressed by these suggestions, the worker should be referred to his/her private healthcare professional, or call the AMH Patient Question line: 376-1999. Please contact your HR department for any company specific guidelines.

All questions or concerns about this position statement should be addressed to Dr. Sandy Rock, Risk Communicator at AMH, (509) 372-0407 Sandy_Rock@rl.gov.

Brian P. Fawcett, MD MPH
Site Occupational Medicine Director

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*P. O. Box 150, G3-70, Richland, Washington 99352
1979 Snyder Street, Suite 150, Richland, Washington 99354*