
GUIDELINES FOR MANAGERS:

COMMUNICATING WITH STAFF ABOUT INFLUENZA A(H1N1)

- ✓ The release of information regarding the current Influenza A(H1N1) outbreak is likely to trigger anxiety and concern among many staff about the risks and the uncertainties for themselves and their families. The following guidelines for communicating and responding to the questions and comments of staff can serve to contain and channel staff reactions, and help them to prepare and protect themselves and their families in a realistic way.
- ✓ Consider including medical staff, counselors, and peer helpers in group meetings on the topic, to respond to questions about health risks and protection;
- ✓ It is important for staff to be given facts about the situation and have their immediate concerns addressed in order to dispel rumors. This information will be disseminated to staff at all levels including headquarters, country offices, and sub-offices. Acknowledging what is not known but assuring staff that as additional information becomes available it will be posted on the PAHO intranet homepage. Staff are also advised to regularly check the WHO and CDC websites for additional information. The websites are listed as follows;
<http://www.WHO.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/>, <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/>
- ✓ Note that action is an antidote for feelings of helplessness
- ✓ Regular briefings in all offices are essential to contain staff anxiety as well as rumor circulation. A calm and reassuring approach is an antidote for anxiety. Encourage staff to raise questions and concerns and listen to and acknowledge them. Also pay attention to what is unspoken and to staff who may be withdrawn;
- ✓ Efforts should be made to keep the discussion supportive. Venting of strong negative feelings are a normal reaction to an upsetting event, but expressions of strong emotions may leave other colleagues feeling anxious or vulnerable, so responses should be guided and contained. However, do not attempt to deny or minimize the potential impact on staff;
- ✓ Remind staff of the availability of resources for information and support -- medical services staff, stress counselors, Peer Support Volunteers/ Personnel, HR officers and others, as well as UN stress management materials (booklets, brochures, etc) and encourage staff to make use of those;