



# GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

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## CLEANING SCHOOLS EFFECTIVELY THE SAFE AND HEALTHY WAY Guidance for Superintendents and Facility Managers

With the emergence of bacteria and viruses that can cause widespread illnesses affecting the school community, questions arise as to how best to maintain the schools in a safe, healthy and effective manner. While we recognize the need to “do something” when faced with an alarming/dangerous/unknown situation and pressure from parents and staff demanding total disinfection, the risks associated with disinfecting the schools must be considered. This fact sheet gives general guidance on how to clean a school and use disinfectants safely.

Studies have shown that influenza virus can survive on environmental surfaces and can infect a person for up to 2-8 hours after being deposited on the surface. By the time students and staff come to the school in the morning, influenza virus on surfaces from the day before would no longer be infectious. In light of this fact, it does not make sense to close a school for the purpose of cleaning when influenza cases are detected among staff and students. Instead, schools should continue to clean and disinfect the school buildings according to the regularly followed schedule.

Some general school cleaning guidelines are provided below.

### Definitions for Cleaning Products:

All purpose cleaners **remove** dirt and most organisms. When considering which cleaner to use, choose less toxic, third party certified green cleaners.

Sanitizers **reduce** bacteria (e.g., MRSA) by 99.9%.

Disinfectants **destroy** multiple organisms including bacteria and many viruses (e.g. influenza).

Disinfectants are regulated by the U.S. EPA. They may contain active ingredients such as chlorine or hypochlorite, phenolics, aldehydes, quaternary ammonium compounds (quats), alcohols, or hydrogen peroxide compounds. Schools should work with their cleaning chemical suppliers to assure that only U.S. EPA listed disinfectants are used.

### When using a disinfectant:

- Select product carefully.
- Know what it is used for. Know how to use it correctly. **READ THE LABEL** to determine the appropriate:
  - application procedure
  - dilution
  - contact/dwell time (time needed for disinfectant to work as indicated)
  - personal protective equipment

- Clean surfaces before use.
- Only disinfect surfaces that are touched by multiple people (high touch points such as hand railings and door knobs).
- Do not use disinfectants over large areas such as lockers, floors or walls.
- DO NOT mix disinfectants with cleaners that contain ammonia.

Note : Overuse of disinfectants increases exposure to the chemicals in the disinfectant and could result in toxic effects or increased sensitivity in exposed individuals.

**There should be a plan on when and where to disinfect that employs a prudent and targeted use of disinfectants for surfaces touched frequently by hands.**

### **Recommended Best Practice Cleaning Protocols:**

Clean the school thoroughly:

- Capture dirt at entryways with walk-off mats;
- Know how and when to use disinfectants;
- Keep ventilation on when cleaning;
- Update and maintain equipment: microfiber cloths, auto scrubbers, vacuums with good filtration;
- Use a green certified all purpose cleaner during the day for high touch points;
- Use a disinfectant on high touch point areas at the end of day without occupants in the school.

### **When A Problem Occurs:**

Learn more about the organism you are dealing with – bacteria or virus – and its route of transmission – droplets (respiratory) or direct contact. Consult with the local health director (LHD) or the CT Department of Public Health for guidance (860-509-7994).

Communicate clearly to faculty, staff, parents, and the community the risks associated with the virus/ bacteria and the risks associated with using toxic chemicals.

Employ good infection control procedures throughout the school. Coordinate with the school nurse and LHD to educate staff, students, and parents on good personal and hand hygiene including cough etiquette and social distancing.

Adopt “best practices” for cleaning, if not already doing so, including a green cleaning program.

Assure that the school is cleaned daily according to established protocols. It is NOT necessary to disinfect the entire school or close the school for the purpose of disinfection.

**For more information on novel H1N1 flu,** visit the web site at:

<http://www.ct.gov/ctfluwatch>.

**For more information on green cleaning,** visit the following web sites:

CTDPH: <http://www.ct.gov/dph/ieq>

INFORM Cleaning for Health: <http://informinc.org>

CT Foundation for Environmentally Safe Schools: <http://www.pollutionfreeschools.org>

Reference: <http://www.epa.gov/oppad001/influenza-disinfectants.html>