



## FACT SHEET

# Issues Surrounding School-Age Evacuees Attending New Schools

**Audience: General public**

### **School-age evacuees do not pose an increased health risk in schools**

The migration of residents from hurricane Katrina-affected areas to other states has caused concern about the potential for disease outbreak. Parents in communities absorbing evacuees do not need to worry about their children's new classmates spreading diseases that are preventable by vaccines. Further, children from hurricane-affected areas do not pose an increased health risk to their new classmates.

The reason school-age evacuees do not pose an increased health threat is because schoolchildren, including those from hurricane-affected areas, are required to have up-to-date vaccinations prior to beginning the school year. If a child was in school prior to the hurricane, they should be treated as if their vaccinations are up to date.

Another concern is whether children from affected areas who have been exposed to contaminated water, food, and other environmental hazards pose a health threat in their new schools. In this vein, there is no increased health risk, either. No disease outbreaks have been reported from the affected areas that these children would have been exposed to prior to arriving in their new school.

### **Treat illnesses the same as you would under normal conditions**

Children in classrooms with evacuees, or the evacuees themselves, that develop any kind of illness should seek medical attention as they would under normal circumstances. For example, a child with a fever should not attend school until the fever is gone and the child should be examined by a physician and treated for their illness.

### **Accepting a school-age evacuee into the classroom**

The child from a hurricane-affected area will have a number of issues to deal with, including being the "new kid" in class, and having experienced a very traumatic event. School staff and classmates play an important role in helping the child assimilate to his or her new environment. It would be helpful if staff and classmates make an effort to identify the child's needs, such as clothing, toiletries, and others. Parents may even ask the new child's teacher how they can help. Helping the child and family can be approached as a "class project" that could help the child and his or her new classmates bond with one another.

### **Immunization guidance for school-age evacuees entering school**

All states have school entry requirements that may preclude admission of children who are not able to document adequate immunization status. Since it is unlikely that parents from hurricane affected areas will have their children's immunization records with them and providing them in the future may be difficult, enforcement of the existing school entry requirements may have the unintended consequence of not allowing children from hurricane-affected areas to enroll.

To facilitate school enrollment for school-age evacuees, some states have opted to waive their school entry immunization requirements for these children. Both the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials encourage states to consider waiving school entry requirements as the situation warrants, and consistent with their own state laws.

For more information, visit [www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/hurricanes](http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/hurricanes), or call CDC at 800-CDC-INFO (English and Spanish) or 888-232-6348 (TTY).

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