



**BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS**  
OF THE GULF COAST



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## Preparing for a H1N1 (Swine Flu) Pandemic

### Coping and Emotional Well Being

In this issue:

The H1N1 virus: How are you coping?

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An interview with Debra Bowers

#### What to Prepare for

The H1N1 (swine flu) outbreak has gained prominence since it began in April 2009. A flu pandemic is a global outbreak of disease that occurs when a new influenza virus appears to which people have little or no immunity. It affects people of all ages, backgrounds and locations, and could cause high numbers of illness and death as well as social disruption.

These circumstances could significantly affect you. You may need to reorganize your life to care for loved ones or to receive care. You may lose income if your workplace closes or you become ill. School closures can result in the need for home-schooling or other activities for homebound children. The many changes in day-to-day living can cause anxiety and stress.

#### Coping with Stress and Anxiety

Some ways you can cope with stress and anxiety are-

- Get accurate information from reliable sources.
- Educate yourself about the flu pandemic.
- Maintain your normal daily routine, if you can.
- Exercise, eat well, and rest.
- Stay active— physically and mentally.
- Spend more time with your children. Talk with them about H1N1.
- Maintain a hopeful outlook— remember that government and experts are working

to make things better.

- Find comfort in your spiritual and personal beliefs.

- Keep a sense of humor.

#### Increase your Psychological Resilience

Psychological resilience is your ability to “bounce back” from difficult events. Certain strategies can increase your resilience and bring about new emotional strengths. The following tips can help you deal with life’s difficulties, including a pandemic.

#### Identify how you cope with a crisis.

Identify your coping strengths. What other crises have occurred in your life? How did they affect you? How did you cope? Did your coping style work? Are there other ways you might cope?

#### Foster healthy attitudes and beliefs.

Crises and difficult circumstances are stressful but can be overcome. Focus on finding solutions and ways to improve your situation.

#### Choose nurturing and healthy behaviors

Identify your goals and move toward them, even though progress may seem slow at times. Take decisive action in protecting and preparing yourself and your loved ones, rather than letting the pandemic situation make your choices for you.

#### Professional Help

Seek professional mental health care for yourself or you loved ones if you or they experience-

-Loss of sleep, frequent nightmares or disruptive and intrusive thoughts.

-Feelings of depression or feelings that lead to an inability to engage in usual activities.

-Disorientation, extreme memory difficulties or losing awareness of time, date and place.

-Hallucinations or delusions, such as hearing or seeing things that are not here, extremely unrealistic thinking or excessive preoccupation with an idea or thought.

-A previously identified mental health condition recurs or becomes worse.

If these circumstances occur, contact your personal physician or mental health provider. If you are currently working with a mental health provider, ask how services will be provided during a pandemic, and consider or discuss how you might get needed support or assistance from family and friends. You can also seek local mental health resources by contacting the U.S. National Mental Health Information Center at

[mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/databases](http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/databases) or

1-800-789-2647.

Reprinted from the American Red Cross article “Preparing for a H1N1 (Swine Flu) Pandemic: Coping and Emotional Well-being”

Find the full article at [http://www.redcross.org/www-files/Documents/pdf/Preparedness/SwineH1N1FluCopingFactSheet.pdf?utm\\_source=BRCR&utm\\_medium=PDF&utm\\_campaign=Flu\\_CopingTips](http://www.redcross.org/www-files/Documents/pdf/Preparedness/SwineH1N1FluCopingFactSheet.pdf?utm_source=BRCR&utm_medium=PDF&utm_campaign=Flu_CopingTips)



### Upcoming Meetings and Holidays

December 9th

3:30pm

Staff Meeting

Ethical Issues in a School Setting

January 21st

3:30pm

Staffing

Please come prepared with your case notes.

December 11th

BGCGC Annual Holiday Party

December 19– January 3rd

Winter Break

Have a great holiday!



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To enable all young people, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens.

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Happy Holidays!

## 10 Questions with Debra Bowers Special Education Director of Biloxi Public School District

### 1. Where did you begin your career on the MS Gulf Coast and what were you doing?

My career on the Gulf Coast began in Biloxi during the 2004-2005 school year. Dr. Paul Tisdale took over as Superintendent that year and hired me to fill the vacant special education position. MY career has spanned 37 years and I have worked in a number of districts: South Panola County, Orleans Parish in New Orleans, Magnolia Speech School in Jackson, Jackson Public, Vicksburg Warren Public, and now Biloxi Public.

### 2. When did you begin working as Special Education Director for Biloxi Public Schools?

I began in Biloxi during the 2004-2005 school year.

### 3. What has been most rewarding about your role in the school district?

The most rewarding thing about my job is to work in a district with a Superintendent who lets me try new approaches to old problems.

### 4. What has been the biggest challenge in your current role in the school district?

The biggest challenge is to program for students with emotional disabilities. They are the most misunderstood students. What most people do not know is that they need the most care and understanding. These students are seen as trouble-makers and treated as any other student who might have made a bad choice. These students have to be treated differently and it is a very difficult concept to explain to many people.

### 5. What is a day in the life of a Special Education Director like?

You try to finish putting on eye make-up as you talk with a parent who has gotten your cell phone number. You finally finish that conversation as you drive to work. When the door to the office is opened there are two calls waiting because some students had a fight on the bus. At 8:30 there is a meeting with district administrators and a planning session at lunch. A return to the office might meet you with a call from the Mississippi Department of Education because they need a correction to one of the six reports you sent. At two you have a staff meeting to discuss the fact that your district has not identified enough students as EmD. At four you begin to breathe because the phone has

stopped ringing so much and you look at your desk to see if there is anything that might be finished before leaving for home. As you drive home down Highway 90 the waves on the water seem to wash all of the frustration out into the Gulf. This might seem a little "tongue in cheek" but it is fairly typical and I do not want to even think about changing a thing. I really do like what I do.

### 6. How has New Hope helped you accomplish goals for the Special Education Department?

I will go back to my answer to number four. I have tried to create programs for our students with emotional and behavioral issues. I have had the opportunity to work with New Hope to create some new programs. We now have classes at the elementary, junior high, and high school levels to serve these students. This is our first year but I look forward to the years to come when these students are graduating from high school with general education diplomas. The behavior facilitators have helped us with teaching social skills in a very real way. I am thankful for our collaboration.

### 7. Where is your favorite place to get lunch during a day at work?

Newk's is my new all time favorite place. There are so many choices that I can eat there for a while without a repeat meal.

### 8. Where will you take your next big vacation?

I hope to drive up the East Coast with my husband and little dog. I would love to explore the New England area.

### 9. What do you do for stress relief?

I get in my car and scream as I drive down the beach. You will be surprised how relaxing it is to stretch all of your facial muscles while screaming. HAHA. I do try to wait until nobody is driving beside me.

### 10. What is your favorite show on television right now?

I am stuck on soap operas and I watch All My Children at night on the Soapnet Channel. My other favorite is any of the CSI shows.

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