

FL Atlantic University reserves 'sick rooms' as dozens of students come down with suspected swine flu

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Swine flu "sick rooms" set aside in Florida Atlantic University dormitories have hosted two students since the start of classes as dozens have fallen victim to what school officials say has been mostly a mild illness.

Three dorm rooms — about 10 beds — are reserved for students believed to have the H1N1 virus who can't get home but also don't want to infect a roommate. One student has already returned to a regular room, while a second remains in self-isolation with food and necessities being delivered by a "flu buddy." FAU classes began Aug. 24.

Since summer, FAU's health clinic has seen fewer than 100 cases of suspected swine flu. Student health director Cathie Wallace did not want to give an exact number because, without tests, the school can't confirm that the students are sick with actual swine flu.

"We've seen dozens since the beginning of school," Wallace said. "It's a rolling influenza. One group gets sick, recovers, and another group gets sick."

FAU had originally set aside the extra residence hall beds for healthy students who wanted to escape a sick roommate.

But Jill Eckardt, director of student housing, said most healthy students are finding other places to bunk when their roommate gets sick.

"We are offering the option to relocate," said Eckardt, who has no way to know if the number of sick rooms will be enough. "But some students, healthy ones, are staying with friends."

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has warned that between 30 and 50 percent of university students could get sick this fall.

Hundreds of sick university students nationwide are being housed together. Emory University in Atlanta has about 100 sick students in a special residence hall area that they have come to call "Club Swine."