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H1N1 Flu Update

This information is provided by the Public Health Department (PHD) to update school personnel on what is currently known regarding H1N1 vaccination plans. Not all questions have answers at this time. As PHD receives updates from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), additional information will be provided.

A H1N1 vaccine is being developed at the national level and clinical trials are underway. The H1N1 vaccine will need to be given in 2 separate vaccinations.

The CDC has identified priority groups to receive vaccine initially including 2 groups of children, among others.

- Children from 6 months through 4 years of age
- Children aged 5-18 who have chronic medical conditions

Once the first level priority groups have received H1N1 vaccine, other priority groups will be vaccinated. The next priority level includes all children age 5-24 and people aged 25-64 with chronic conditions, among others. For more information on priority groups for H1N1 vaccination and other information, go to www.cdc.gov.

CDC does not expect there will be a shortage of H1N1 vaccine but there is some possibility that the Public Health Department will receive H1N1 vaccine in phases. Consequently the planning efforts underway at this time will focus on reaching level one priority groups first.

The PHD is working with our immunization partners to ensure the target groups from the CDC are vaccinated as early as possible. The initial plan is to distribute this vaccine through current seasonal flu vaccine providers and through new community providers in addition to our own healthcare system. At this time we have limited information about when H1N1 flu vaccine will be available – but sometime in the late fall is likely.

As school districts and child care providers prepare for the beginning of the new school year, it's a good time to plan for preventing the spread of flu and other illness in school and child care settings.

- **Get seasonal flu shots** - Flu can vary from mild to severe. The single best way to prevent the seasonal flu is to get a flu vaccination each year. Individuals are urged to get a seasonal flu vaccine from their health provider as soon as possible. To protect against seasonal flu, CDC recommends all children 6 months to 18 years of age get vaccinated against seasonal flu as soon as possible.
- **Get H1N1 vaccine** – Monitor information from all sources to learn when the H1N1 vaccine will become available and which groups of children will be eligible to receive it.

- **Prevent the spread of droplets** – Good hygiene prevents contact with droplets that are often the reason the disease spreads from person to person. The good hygiene steps include covering coughs and sneezes, washing hands often with soap and water, avoiding touching your eyes, nose, or mouth, trying to avoid close contact with sick people and staying home when you are sick. When these good hygiene steps are taken, the spread of illness is prevented.
- **Maintain your health** - Healthy eating, getting physical activity, getting enough sleep, and using medications as prescribed are some of the many steps one can take to maintain health. Individuals with underlying medical conditions, including respiratory illnesses and severe obesity, may be at an increased risk of severe illness. Following guidelines for healthy living enhance well-being and support individuals with or without underlying medical conditions.

Please feel free to distribute the “Frequently Asked Questions” document broadly. The Public Health Department will be implementing a phone line for H1N1 related questions in the next couple of weeks. If you have questions in the interim, please contact Susan Klein-Rothschild at 681-5435.

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