

Novel H1N1 Update for Colorado Legislators
Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
July 27, 2009

Influenza illness, including illness associated with the novel influenza A (H1N1) virus, is ongoing in the United States. As of July 24, 2009, 43,771 confirmed and probable infections with novel influenza A (H1N1) virus and 302 deaths have been reported to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention by state and local public health departments. In Colorado, there have been 213 cases of confirmed or probable H1N1 infection, 41 hospitalizations, and no deaths as of July 18. However, these case counts substantially underestimate the actual number of novel H1N1 cases in the United States and Colorado since most cases are not tested for influenza. For this reason, both CDC and CDPHE will not continue to count all individual cases, except for individuals who have been hospitalized or have died. The impact of H1N1 will continue to be tracked using traditional flu surveillance systems. These systems work to determine when and where flu activity is occurring, track flu-related illness, determine what flu viruses are circulating, detect changes in flu viruses, and measure the impact of flu on hospitalizations and deaths.

CDC estimates that there have been at least 1 million cases of novel H1N1 in the United States. There continues to be higher levels of influenza-like illness than is normal for this time of year, and novel H1N1 outbreaks are ongoing in parts of the United States, including Colorado. As of July 20, 2009, 24 camps in Colorado have reported cases of H1N1. There have been 2 hospitalizations due to H1N1 infections in camps. State and local public health officials have consulted with camp health workers and administrators for these camps to provide guidance about camp closure, use of antiviral medication, and proper infection control measures.

Since September 28, 2008, CDC has received 90 reports of laboratory confirmed influenza-associated pediatric deaths that occurred during the 2008-09 influenza season, 23 of which were due to novel influenza A (H1N1) virus infections. No pediatric deaths due to H1N1 have occurred in Colorado, but there were 5 deaths in children due to seasonal flu during the 2008-2009 season.

It's uncertain at this time how severe this pandemic will be in terms of how many people infected will have severe complications or death from novel H1N1-related illness. It is likely that localized outbreaks will continue to occur over the summer and that we will see novel H1N1 virus, illness and death during the upcoming U.S. flu season in the fall and winter. CDC anticipates that novel H1N1 viruses will co-circulate with regular seasonal influenza viruses over our influenza season. The timing, spread and severity of novel H1N1 virus – in addition to our regular seasonal influenza viruses - are uncertain. We are still learning about the severity and other epidemiological characteristics of the novel H1N1 virus and are watching the Southern Hemisphere very carefully to see how novel H1N1 affects its influenza season.

The Southern Hemisphere is in the middle of its flu season, and CDC is reporting co-circulation of seasonal influenza viruses along with the novel H1N1 virus. Novel H1N1

virus is showing dominance in Central and South America. The characteristics of novel H1N1 disease has not appeared to change – its symptoms and severity are still similar to seasonal influenza.

CDPHE is doing several things in preparation for the continued presence of novel H1N1 virus along with seasonal flu this fall:

With the help of \$5 million in new funding from the federal government, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment is making plans and strengthening its infrastructure ahead of the expected delivery of H1N1 vaccine into the state later this year. Part of the federal funding will flow directly to the state's hospitals so those facilities can prepare for H1N1 flu-related activities.

Based on early communication from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), vaccination for the H1N1 flu will be advised for a significant portion of the state's population. This vaccination campaign will be voluntary.

In upcoming days and weeks, the Department of Public Health and Environment will issue a series of news releases focused on how residents can help stop the spread of flu viruses at home, work and school.

The first shipment of H1N1 vaccine is expected to arrive in Colorado as early as mid-October; however, it may be later, depending on when the vaccine production process is complete. While the categories of those to be vaccinated still are being considered, likely groups include school-age children, children who attend preschool or child care facilities, adults younger than 65 with chronic medical conditions, pregnant women and health-care workers.

While seasonal flu vaccinations will be available at many sites as in years past, delivery and vaccination sites for the H1N1 vaccination still are being identified. Public health departments and schools are on the likely list of H1N1 vaccination sites thus far. It is expected the H1N1 vaccine, unlike the seasonal flu vaccine, will be made available to residents for free. Pricing for the seasonal flu vaccine is expected to remain close to previous years' costs.

In addition to getting vaccinated with the H1N1 vaccine, CDPHE will continue to advise residents to protect themselves from H1N1 the way they protect themselves and others from seasonal influenza: wash their hands frequently, stay home from school and work when they are sick and cough into their sleeves instead of their hands. Residents with underlying health issues should talk to their doctors about additional steps they can take to remain safe from flu viruses, as they are at higher risk.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, specifically the assistant secretary of Preparedness and Response's Division of Healthcare Preparedness Program, has awarded Colorado \$1.4 million to be used to prepare hospitals for a possible pandemic influenza event this fall. The Department of Public Health and Environment's Hospital

Preparedness Program will manage this funding and is planning to distribute the monies to Colorado hospitals in an effort to help those facilities augment their infrastructures to better respond to the citizens of Colorado during a potential pandemic influenza outbreak.

The state health department will receive \$4 million from a Public Health Emergency Response grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The purpose of this grant is to support the state and local public health infrastructure, including these measures:

- strengthening and sustaining the public health work force;
- increasing laboratory capacity and capability;
- strengthening disease surveillance activities;
- planning and implementing possible large-scale mass vaccination activities;
- developing and communicating effective public guidance to lessen the impact of the illness in communities;
- purchasing and procuring personal protective equipment, antivirals and other pandemic-related purchases for protecting the public health work force;
- training and educating of the public health work force;
- community and personal preparedness activities; and
- addressing gaps and other public health preparedness challenges related to public health preparedness and response to an influenza pandemic.

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment will be developing guidelines and recommendations on vaccination and the local county health departments will determine how to best implement the program in their area. For more information on vaccine implementation in your district, please contact your local health department. For general information on influenza vaccinations in Colorado, visit the Department of Public Health and Environment's Web site at www.cdphe.state.co.us. For information about H1N1, visit www.flu.gov.