



DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Dear County and City Administrators and Chairs of Boards of Health:

I know you have heard much discussion about the likely resurgence of pandemic strain H1N1 influenza this fall. Some commentators are reassuring, others are scary. The rapid surge of cases among college students in the last week confirms fears that the new virus will probably spread rapidly this fall until, and unless controlled by a vaccine. While impossible to predict with certainty, as many as half of all Americans may fall ill to the pandemic H1N1 strain, while still others suffer normal seasonal influenza. This would seriously crowd our hospitals and health care clinics, and might seriously reduce the productivity of public and private workforces, even if, as predicted, the new flu is not radically worse than "old-fashioned" influenza.

Such disruption could be blunted by vaccination against both the routine seasonal strains of influenza and the novel pandemic H1N1. In the coming weeks, Wisconsin Department of Health Services' Division of Public Health will make funding available to your local public health department to help them vaccinate unprecedented numbers of your community's residents. The H1N1 influenza vaccination program, likely to begin in mid-October, will first target children and young adults prone to spreading influenza in the community, as well as, health care workers to keep them from infecting vulnerable patients. Thus, this year there will be two different vaccination campaigns, and the H1N1 campaign will likely involve mass clinics serving large numbers of young people. This is a very different challenge than most of your health departments have faced in modern memory.

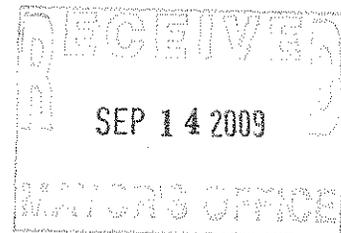
You may know that Governor Jim Doyle declared a health emergency in May to allow state government flexibility to address this unusual situation. We hope that local governments too will allow their local health departments the maximum degree of flexibility in acquiring and dispensing resources, as well as, support from other departments and the private sector necessary to meet our vaccination goals. Within several weeks, our opportunity to make a major difference on this projected epidemic may have passed.

Considerable information regarding both seasonal and pandemic H1N1 influenza is available on <http://pandemic.wisconsin.gov>. My staff or I will be happy to provide any additional information you may need without hesitation.

Thank you for all that you do, and for supporting your local public health department in its quest to keep your community healthy.

Sincerely,

Seth Foldy, MD, MPH, FAAFP
State Health Officer and Administrator
Division of Public Health
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