

MEMORANDUM

TO: State Executives
AHCA/NCAL Leadership and Members

FROM: Janice Zalen, Sr. Director of Special Programs

SUBJECT: **H1N1 Influenza A Update No. 10**

DATE: May 19, 2009

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the H1N1 Influenza A virus is not going away, as some people seem to think. Today, CDC reported 5,649 confirmed and probable cases in 48 states, over 200 hospitalizations and 6 deaths. For a listing of states and the number of cases, please go to <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/update.htm>. Novel influenza A (H1N1) activity is now being detected through CDC's [routine influenza surveillance systems](#) and reported weekly in FluView.

According to CDC, young people between the ages of 5 and 24 constitute the largest number of confirmed cases of the H1N1 virus. The over 65 population does not appear to be experiencing many H1N1 cases nor do they seem to be experiencing complications. CDC does not have an explanation for this though one hypothesis is that older persons may have some immunity. A second hypothesis is that young people spend more time with other young people and not with the elderly so it will take time before H1N1 moves from the younger population to the older population. Regardless, CDC believes that people at high risk of seasonal flu-related complications, including people who are 65 years and older, are at high risk of serious H1N1 flu-related complications. Thus, CDC continues to consider the elderly and facility residents as high risk and a priority for anti-viral medication when needed. Also of interest for your employees, pregnancy seems to be a risk factor for H1N1 influenza-related complications. One of the six deaths was a pregnant woman with no underlying conditions. Studies on this virus are ongoing to learn more about its characteristics and to learn what groups are at highest risk.

Prepare for Two Influenza Viruses this Fall

There is no question that long term care facilities should remain vigilant throughout the summer and prepare for the potential of two influenza viruses

in the fall—the seasonal influenza virus and the novel H1N1 Influenza A virus. To that end, LTC facilities should consider ways to improve the seasonal vaccination rate of its employees and consider ordering additional vaccine. Seasonal vaccine can be ordered now and it is probably a good idea to get orders in early this year.

New CDC Guidance on Infection Control in Healthcare Settings

On May 13, CDC released new *Interim Guidance for Infection Control for Care of Patients with Confirmed or Suspected Novel Influenza A (H1N1) Virus Infection in a Healthcare Setting*. We were disappointed that the CDC did not follow the lead of several states, including New York, Connecticut and Colorado, and several local jurisdictions, including New York City and Los Angeles, and relax its recommendation for N95 respirators. CDC continues to recommend N95s for H1N1 though surgical masks are acceptable for seasonal influenza. The new interim guidance may be accessed at: http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidelines_infection_control.htm.

Helpful Websites

CDC, as well as many other organizations, regularly update and improve their H1N1 websites so that employers and others continue to have the most up-to-date information on the H1N1 influenza virus, and useful tools and resources. Some sites are listed below and others appear in previous Updates.

- CDC and HHS are working together to provide social media tools to encourage sharing, collaboration, and interactivity during the current novel H1N1 influenza outbreak. Widgets, mobile information, online videos, and the like are available at <http://www.cdc.gov/socialmedia/h1n1>;
- CDC offers resources for employers to provide general H1N1 influenza information to employees, constituents, and other partners at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/business>;
- The home page of CDC's H1N1 Flu web section can be accessed at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu>;
- Interim guidance documents from CDC can be accessed directly at <http://www.cdc.gov/H1N1flu/guidance>.
- AHCA/NCAL provides updates, links to resources, and CDC updates at http://www.ahcancal.org/facility_operations/clinical_practice/Pages/SwineFlu.aspx ;
- The Immunization Action Coalition has CDC information well-organized at <http://www.immunize.org/h1n1/>;

Finally, the hallmark of influenza viruses is their ability to undergo constant and dramatic change. CDC continues to watch this virus closely for changes that may make it more virulent or resistant to antiviral drugs.