

Action Steps Local Public Health Agencies Can Take to Prepare for an Influenza Pandemic Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, November 7, 2005

A successful response to a pandemic of influenza, which will limit illnesses and deaths and maintain essential community services, will require good cooperation and communication among many different partners at the local, state, and federal levels. Many preparations for influenza are similar to those instituted for any outbreak of disease and are already in place. The following list of action steps serves as a reminder of these preparations while particularly focusing on specific items to have in place in anticipation of the occurrence of pandemic influenza:

- Ensure health department staff have a family plan to protect their loved ones. Families will be the first priority for staff during an emergency. For further information on creating a family plan for an emergency, visit the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) Ready in Three website at http://www.dhss.mo.gov/Ready_in_3/index.html.
- Revisit communication plans. Ensure contact numbers are updated for key internal staff, regional and Jefferson City DHSS staff, media outlets, health care providers, community leaders and elected officials.
- Review or develop a process to create a daily situation report of the health of your jurisdiction. Be prepared to conduct a daily count of suspected (or known) cases and actions taken (such as school closures) in response to the pandemic.
- Know what action steps would be taken for a suspect case of avian influenza. See the DHSS document “Influenza A (H5N1): Indications for Testing and Infection Control Precautions” at <http://www.dhss.mo.gov/PandemicInfluenza/H5N1Testing-InfectionControl.pdf>. Assure staff are familiar with these recommendations. Contact your regional Senior or Medical Epidemiologist, or Communicable Disease Coordinator, for further assistance if needed.
- Maintain contacts and communication with those expected to receive the vaccine in the first round of distribution in your jurisdiction. This includes, in addition to the usual high-risk groups, health care and public health personnel, community safety and security critical staff (fire, police, etc.) and other highly skilled and/or essential persons who maintain community infrastructure (e.g., utility workers). Approximate how much vaccine and antivirals would be needed to protect these groups in your community.
- Talk to local elected officials, and to church, school and business leaders, about pandemic influenza and the social and economic impacts it could have so that they can be prepared. DHSS has prepared a fact sheet entitled “Frequently Asked Questions Concerning Avian Influenza (FAQs),” available at <http://www.dhss.mo.gov/PandemicInfluenza/FAQs-Avian.pdf>, which can be used as a guide in these conversations, or contact your Senior Regional Planner.
- Encourage vaccination with the current influenza vaccine. Especially target poultry workers for vaccination. DHSS is currently working with the Poultry Federation on this issue. Contact Cindy Luethen with the DHSS immunization program (573-751-6439) if your agency is interested in working with the poultry industry locally on this matter.
- Assure you have a familiarity with quarantine and isolation procedures in case these tools need to be employed on a limited basis. DHSS has developed draft isolation and quarantine orders, and these are available at <http://www.dhss.mo.gov/PandemicInfluenza/DraftOrders.pdf>.
- Review plans for the establishment of informational and/or medical hotlines to ensure adequate resources and staff are in place for anticipated community inquiries.
- Review plans for mass vaccination/medication distribution. Ensure plans are adequate for your community for delivery to take place rapidly and securely.

For access to comprehensive information on pandemic, avian, and seasonal (non-pandemic) influenza, go to the DHSS Pandemic Influenza website at <http://www.dhss.mo.gov/PandemicInfluenza/>.