



# H1N1 Partner Briefing

Date: October 21, 2009  
To: All Rhode Islanders  
From: Director of Health, David R. Gifford, MD, MPH  
Re: Information on H1N1 in Rhode Island

**Local Influenza Activity Level:** Regional<sup>1</sup>, H1N1 predominant circulating strain  
**Rhode Island**<sup>2</sup>: 7 hospitalized cases, 0 deaths  
**National Report**<sup>3</sup>: 20,654 hospitalized cases, 2,321 deaths  
**Sentinel Surveillance (% of visits due to influenza-like illness)**<sup>4</sup>: Rhode Island: 1.9%, New England Region: 1.8%, Nation: 5.8%

## **School-based vaccination clinic update**

HEALTH is developing a randomized, computer-generated process to schedule school vaccination clinics over several weeks. During the first week of November, the Rhode Island Department of Health (HEALTH) will begin vaccinating students in the first scheduled schools. All public, private and home-schooled students in grades kindergarten through 12 will be offered the vaccine in school-based clinics. School administrators and school district superintendents will contact parents with information regarding the dates and times of clinics. The H1N1 vaccine consent form, Vaccine Information Statement, and an accompanying letter was sent home to parents of school-aged children the week of October 19<sup>th</sup>. Children cannot receive this free vaccination in a school without a signed and dated consent form. To download these materials in English or in Spanish, see: <http://www.health.ri.gov/flu/for/parents/>.

## **School closures NOT anticipated**

As expected, HEALTH has observed an increase in influenza-like illness in schools early in this flu season. However, **HEALTH does not anticipate recommending school closures or the cancellation of after-school activities**. The most effective ways to prevent the spread of flu viruses remain getting vaccinated, practicing good health habits such as covering coughs and sneezes, and following HEALTH's recommendations to individuals with flu-like symptoms. All of HEALTH's flu prevention recommendations can be found at <http://www.health.ri.gov/flu/about/prevention/>.

## **Some kindergartners eligible for H1N1 vaccinations in their providers' offices**

Although most of Rhode Island's kindergartners attend elementary schools and will be vaccinated in clinics organized by their school districts, some children attend kindergarten in preschool settings. Because H1N1 vaccinations will not be offered in these schools, these kindergartners should receive the H1N1 vaccine from their pediatricians or family physicians. Pediatricians and family physicians have been directed to vaccinate children who attend private/independent kindergarten programs now, even if they are over the age of 5 years.

## **Changes in SEASONAL flu vaccine shipments**

Adult and pediatric vaccine manufacturers have notified HEALTH of changes in previously scheduled seasonal flu vaccine shipments. Remaining shipments of injectable vaccine for children 3 through 18 years old will not

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<sup>1</sup> Rhode Island reported Regional activity for the week of October 4 to October 10, 2009. Influenza is circulating in 2 regions of the state. For details see <http://www.health.ri.gov/flu/about/surveillance/>.

<sup>2</sup> Influenza-associated hospitalizations and deaths since September 1, 2009

<sup>3</sup> Influenza and pneumonia-associated hospitalizations and deaths from August 30 to October 10, 2009

<sup>4</sup> Influenza-like illness activity from October 4 to October 10, 2009

arrive until sometime in December. HEALTH's adult immunization program will not receive 18% of the total amount of vaccine ordered for the season. Injectable vaccines are being reserved for high-risk patients (anyone age 50 or older, anyone who is pregnant or anyone with an underlying medical condition). HEALTH currently has a sufficient supply of FluMist and has ordered more doses of the nasal spray vaccine, which healthy, non-pregnant adults 19 through 49 years of age should receive. For more information about these vaccine delivery delays, see: <http://www.ri.gov/press/view/9971>.

### **H1N1 flu evaluation tool**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have prepared a web-based evaluation tool that helps individuals determine if they need to see a doctor for symptoms that might be caused by the flu. This evaluation tool should not replace evaluation and treatment by a healthcare professional. The CDC's evaluation tool can be found at: <http://www.flu.gov/evaluation/>.

### **Resources**

- HEALTH at <http://www.health.ri.gov>;
- Archived partner briefings and regular news updates: <http://www.health.ri.gov/news/flu/>
- H1N1 Information Line (M-F 8:30am- 4:30pm) 401-222-8022
- H1N1 email address [h1n1@health.ri.gov](mailto:h1n1@health.ri.gov)
- <http://www.flu.gov>