



State of Wisconsin
Department of Health Services

Jim Doyle, Governor
Karen E. Timberlake, Secretary

H1N1 Situation Report

October 14, 2009 at 12:00 Hours

Overview

Nationally, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that influenza activity continues to increase in most of the United States with more than two thirds of states reporting widespread influenza activity, including Wisconsin.

People are encouraged to follow good hygiene precautions such as hand washing, covering their cough/sneeze with their sleeve or a tissue, and staying home when ill and calling their health care provider first to determine if they should be seen by their local physician or go to the ER/urgent care for treatment.

H1N1 Surveillance

Currently, influenza activity is widespread in Wisconsin and higher than what is normally seen this time of year. Cases of the H1N1 virus have been reported in 52 counties. During the week ending October 10th, outpatient visits for influenza-like illness increased in four of the five regions in the state, the exception being northern Wisconsin.

Of all the circulating influenza viruses in the state, 99% have been confirmed as H1N1. This is comparable to what's being seen nationally where 27% of all specimens tested for influenza have been positive for an influenza virus. Of those 27%, more than 99% were H1N1. None of the H1N1 cases in Wisconsin have been found to be resistant to common antiviral medications, such as Tamiflu.

Since September 1, 2009, there have been 26 hospitalizations due to H1N1 virus infection in Wisconsin. There have been 9 H1N1-related deaths statewide since this spring.

H1N1 Vaccine Update

As of close of business on Friday, October 9th, the CDC estimates it had distributed 8 million doses of H1N1 vaccine. Wisconsin received approximately 147,000 doses of H1N1 vaccine in a combination of the nasal mist and injectable form by Friday, October 9th. Wisconsin received a second shipment of approximately 46,700 doses on October 12th and another 19,500 doses on Tuesday, October 13th.

Wisconsin's initial allocations were targeted toward larger hospitals, clinic systems and public health agencies so they could begin to vaccinate the health care workforce. With the initial orders shipped from the CDC, it is estimated there will be sufficient vaccine to meet the needs of health care workers in the state in the near future. This is dependent upon the CDC release of vaccine allocations to the states.

Once the health care workforce has been immunized, vaccine will be shipped to public health agencies and private health care providers to begin the process of immunizing additional target groups including pregnant women, household contacts and caregivers for children less than 6 months of age, all people from 6 months through 24 years of age, and persons age 25-64 with conditions associated with higher risk of complications from influenza.

DHS is issuing guidance to OB/GYNs and family practitioners requesting they immunize women who are pregnant rather than being referred to a second physician or elsewhere. This same guidance will also be issued to local and tribal health departments so that pregnant women may be immunized immediately in their physician's office.

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A variety of communities have begun announcing public vaccination clinics later in October. In addition, some school districts have begun to announce school-based clinics as early as next week, although it is unclear if the CDC will have shipped vaccine to those school-based clinics in advance. It is recommended that communities wait to schedule school-based clinics until H1N1 vaccine shipments can be guaranteed.

DHS Activities

DHS continued to staff the call center for health professionals pertaining to vaccine ordering questions and information on October 12th, although it had been designated a state-employee required furlough day. Staff schedules were adjusted to ensure that health professionals were able to contact the call center on October 12th and calls did not go unattended. This was done to ensure the continued processing of vaccine orders. DHS staff scheduled to work in the call center on October 12th will take their required furlough day at an alternative time.

DHS is also finalizing its work with 2-1-1 Wisconsin to develop a flu clinic locator on pandemic.wisconsin.gov. People will also be able to call 2-1-1 for local flu clinic information.

DHS is in the process of developing radio and television advertising and public service announcements in an effort to get more children immunized against the H1N1 virus. These announcements will be paid for with federal funding and will be produced in English, Hmong, and Spanish.

Partner Items

DHS is continuing its regular conference calls, webcasts and issuing guidance to health professionals statewide. DHS also conducted a webcast for law enforcement and first responders on October 7th.

The Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs has dedicated two individuals to assist in processing vaccine orders.

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School Closures

Unusually high rates of student absenteeism due to influenza-like illness have led to temporary school closures in some districts around the state. The Wisconsin Dells School District closed its five schools from October 7-October 9 after approximately 27% of high school students were out sick and many more at school were showing influenza-like illness symptoms. Schools reopened on Monday October 12th.

The River Valley Middle School (Spring Green, WI) closed October 13-16 after nearly 40% of students were absent. The Medford Area School District dismissed schools from October 13-16 when 30% of high school students and 19% of students district-wide were absent, many with influenza-like illness.

The CDC and DHS continue to stress that school closure should be used as a last resort due to disruption of learning and the social impact. However, if high rates of student or staff absenteeism make it difficult for schools to operate, a limited closure may be the best option to decrease exposure to influenza. In most cases, the decision to close schools is a joint decision made by local health departments and school administrators in consultation with DHS.

Parents are reminded that keeping sick children home from school until 24 hours after they are free of fever (100°F [37.8°C] or greater) without the aid of medication is the safest way to prevent the spread of any illness. DHS is also encouraging parents to have a pre-designated plan for caring for a sick child at home for the duration of a school exclusion period. Wisconsin businesses are also encouraged to adopt similar plans with their employees.