

Flu Update #1

H1N1 flu virus has not been in the news as much as last spring. However, surprisingly the virus has continued to spread in Oregon and has caused hospitalizations of people with that virus. Attached is a recent fact sheet from the Public Health Division of DHS. Also attached is a poster that can be printed and posted where you wish. Feel free to share.

It is anticipated that the fall and winter will be a very active flu season. It is important that facilities start planning now for the likely increased activity. In order to assist you to be as prepared as possible, SPD will be sending you a short series of tips and updates.

Flu Vaccines

There will likely be two different vaccines offered this fall: the seasonal flu vaccine and a new H1N1 vaccine.

- Seasonal flu vaccine. This vaccine will target the anticipated strains of flu that usually circulate. Distribution will likely be through the usual manner (local doctor offices, flu clinics in stores, etc.) but may be available early. Because absenteeism could be very high with the H1N1 virus, it is especially important that staff are encouraged to get their seasonal flu shots. People should be especially diligent this year in obtaining vaccinations for the people served by your agency. If seasonal flu vaccine is available early, it would be good to immunize early. It will protect the person throughout the entire year for the seasonal flu.
- Novel H1N1 vaccine. This vaccine will only target the H1N1 virus. The priority populations for this new vaccine and the distribution system are being planned now. Because this virus appears to infect children and young adults at such high rates, it is likely that the priority population for vaccine will be different than usual. It will also likely be distributed in a different manner. Your local Public Health Department will play a key role this fall and will have the most up-to-date information. Now is the time to make those contacts if you haven't already.

Recommendations:

1. Make sure that all people served are offered a seasonal flu shot as soon as available.

2. If you don't already, consider your policies and procedures to help ensure that as many as possible staff get their seasonal flu shot.
3. Make contact now with your local Health Department. Know how they plan to communicate information about flu and vaccines to your community.
4. Stay in contact this fall with your local Health Department.