

# The Flu and H1N1

## *What Service Programs Need to Know*

### Preparedness Recommendations for the 2009-2010 Influenza Season

Has your program been impacted by the spring and summer outbreaks of the flu and the H1N1 (Swine) flu virus? Get ready, because the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), The World Health Organization (WHO), The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as well as other health agencies are predicting that the fall and winter outbreak of the 2009-2010 H1N1 influenza virus may be more severe. NCADV has created this document to help you and your program prepare for any outbreaks and the impact they may have on your employees, your programs and those you serve.

While there is no definitive way to predict just how impactful and severe any outbreak of the H1N1 Influenza virus will be on your program or community, there are several things you can do to help off-set its impact and the further spread of the virus.

As busy as you are, it is *critical* that you have a plan—not only for taking care of yourself, but also preparing for any impact on your program’s daily operations. According to the CDC, people with flu-like illnesses need to stay home until at least 24 hours *after* they are free of fever (100° F [37.8° C] or greater) without the aid of fever-reducing medications. In most cases, this means staying home for at least 3 to 5 days.

Regardless of the size of your program, you should plan to be flexible with allowing and encouraging employees to stay home without fear of losing their jobs should they become sick, have to care for sick family members or watch their children if schools or childcare facilities close. If you offer shelter services and find that shelter residents become sick, designate a separate area for the ill person or persons that is as far from the rest of your shelter residents and employees as possible. Encourage *everyone* to wash hands and common surfaces frequently or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer; to cover their mouths when coughing or sneezing; to keep their distance from others if sick; to avoid touching their nose, mouth and eyes and to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Be flexible with work options and time off and cross-train multiple employees on essential jobs.

**IN SHORT, HAVE A PLAN!**

### *Reference*

- Develop a planning team to assess your agency’s risk and to write and execute an emergency plan of action should your program be impacted by high employee absenteeism, a reduction in services or possible closure due to the H1N1 flu virus.
- Be flexible with allowing employees to stay home if they become sick with the virus and encourage them not to come to work.
- Encourage employees and others within your program to get a seasonal flu vaccine if it is appropriate for them and to get the 2009 H1N1 vaccine if they are in a priority group.
- Stock up on soap, cleaning supplies, hand sanitizer, face masks and Kleenex and make them readily available to all.
- Confer with your local health department to determine the disease severity within your community.
- Try to minimize face-to-face contact between workers should your agency risk rise.
- Cross-train employees on essential program duties to help off-set possible high employee absenteeism.
- Have a plan of action in the event the flu impacts your program so severely that you have to shut down, even if temporarily.

## How does the H1N1 flu differ from the seasonal flu?

The symptoms of the seasonal flu and the H1N1 (Swine) flu actually don't differ greatly from one another. However, the H1N1 virus can be more severe and is usually accompanied by vomiting and/or diarrhea. While most people have a natural immunity to the seasonal flu, humans have not developed an immunity to the new H1N1 flu virus. Therefore, this strain of the virus may cause a more dangerous flu season meaning more people may get sick, more may be hospitalized and more may die than during a regular flu season.

## Symptoms of the Flu:

- \* Fever (100° F [ 37.8° C] or greater)
- \* Coughing and/or sore throat
- \* Runny or stuffy nose
- \* Headaches and/or body aches
- \* Chills
- \* Fatigue

**H1N1** flu symptoms are the same as the seasonal flu, but may be more severe and can also include:

- \* Vomiting
- \* Diarrhea

## Emergency Signs:

**IN ADULTS:** difficulty breathing/shortness of breath; pain or pressure in chest or abdomen; sudden dizziness; confusion; severe or persistent vomiting; flu-like symptoms that go away but return with fever and worse cough.

**IN CHILDREN:** fast breathing/trouble breathing; bluish or gray skin color; not drinking enough fluids; severe or persistent vomiting; not waking up or not interacting; being so irritable that the child does not want to be held; flu-like symptoms that go away but return with fever and worse cough.

## What Programs Can Do:

- \* Plan now—what will you do if you have to close or reduce programming, even if temporarily? Discuss and share with others.
- \* Be flexible with employee leave policies.
- \* Encourage employees to go home or stay home if ill.
- \* Encourage vaccines, especially for high risk populations (pregnant, elderly, children, those with chronic diseases).
- \* Make tissue, soap, hand-cleaner, masks readily available. Encourage cleanliness in common areas.
- \* Plan for higher than average absences, cross-train employees for essential job operations or plan to hire temporary workers.
- \* If you offer shelter, where will you house sick residents? Where will you send them if you are forced to close?
- \* Coordinate and confer with your local health department about the severity of the flu in your community. Plan accordingly.
- \* Collaborate with other community organizations to create alternatives for housing, programming or other services.

## Additional Resources

### General Flu Info

[www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov)

### 2009 H1N1 Flu Resources for Business and Employers

[www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/business](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/business)

[www.flu.gov/professional/business/index.html](http://www.flu.gov/professional/business/index.html)

### Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Hotline

1-800-321-OSHA (6742)

### CDC Info 24 Hours/Every Day

1 (800) CDC-INFO (232-4636)

TTY: (888) 232-6348, [cdcinfo@cdc.gov](mailto:cdcinfo@cdc.gov)

### Small Business Administration (SBA) Disaster Preparedness Page

[www.sba.gov/services/disasterassistance/disasterpreparedness/index.html](http://www.sba.gov/services/disasterassistance/disasterpreparedness/index.html)

### Workplace Questions

[www.flu.gov/faq/workplace\\_questions](http://www.flu.gov/faq/workplace_questions)

### Pandemic Plan

[www.osha.gov/dsg/topics/pandemicflu.index.html](http://www.osha.gov/dsg/topics/pandemicflu.index.html)