



H1N1 Partner and School Briefing

Date: November 18, 2009
To: All Rhode Islanders
From: Director of Health, David R. Gifford, MD, MPH
Re: Information on H1N1 and school-based vaccination clinics in Rhode Island

Local Influenza Activity Level: Widespread¹, H1N1 predominant circulating strain
Rhode Island²: 279 hospitalized cases, 7 deaths
Sentinel Surveillance (% of visits due to influenza-like illness)³: Rhode Island: 12.97%, New England Region: 9.6%, Nation: 6.3%

Surveillance data indicate that influenza-like illness (ILI) activity in Rhode Island appears to be decreasing at this time. Reports of ILI from the state's twenty-eight sentinel surveillance sites have decreased in all five counties. The percentage of total emergency room visits for "fever/flu" syndrome, as reported to HEALTH's web-based Realtime Outbreak Detection Surveillance System (RODS), has also decreased. Finally, fewer schools are currently reporting above-normal rates of school absenteeism. Flu activity and flu-related hospitalizations still remain high nationwide for this time of year, and it is likely that activity will increase again in Rhode Island. People should continue to practice good prevention techniques such as washing their hands regularly, covering their coughs and staying home when they are sick and should receive the H1N1 vaccine once it becomes available to them.

H1N1 vaccination of post-partum women

Rhode Island women who are up to six months post-partum can now be vaccinated against H1N1 influenza. These women, as well as pregnant women, should make appointments to be vaccinated by their prenatal care providers or at their birthing hospital.

Posters promoting vaccination available on HEALTH's website

Numerous posters encouraging vaccination for pregnant women, children, and others are available to download and print from the website of the Rhode Island Department of Health (HEALTH) at <http://www.health.ri.gov/flu/about/prevention/> (Look for the section titled "Educational Resources"). Materials in other languages are available on HEALTH's website at <http://www.health.ri.gov/flu/languages/>, and other free educational resources on seasonal and H1N1 flu are available on the website of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/freeresources.htm>.

H1N1 school-based clinic vaccine uptake

38,537 school-aged children have received the H1N1 vaccine over the first ten days of HEALTH's 28-day H1N1 school-based vaccination program. 75.75% of currently enrolled students received the vaccine in school clinics held during this time period.

¹ Rhode Island reported Widespread activity for the week of November 1 to November 7, 2009. Influenza is circulating in 5 regions of the state. For details see <http://www.health.ri.gov/flu/about/surveillance/>.

² Confirmed and probable hospitalizations and deaths since September 1, 2009

³ Influenza-like illness activity from November 1 to November 7, 2009

Medical Reserve Corps Members

The members of the Rhode Island Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) at HEALTH's school-based vaccination clinics are all volunteers. In offering their time and expertise they have helped make HEALTH's historic vaccination campaign successful. Challenges are bound to arise during clinics and the MRC volunteers have proven flexible in mitigating these problems. Clinic organizers are urged to bring any concern to the MRC clinic supervisor and to work with these individuals to resolve any issues that arise.

Important school-based clinic reminders

- Even with a doctor's note, a child CANNOT be vaccinated in a school that he or she does not attend. Clinic organizers should contact the Rhode Island Department of Health (HEALTH)'s H1N1 Information Line at (401) 222-8022 if they receive a note from a doctor requesting that a child be vaccinated in a school that he or she does not attend.
- Photography and video and audio recordings of any kind are prohibited in clinics when students are being vaccinated. This policy applies to parents, students and members of the media.
- A child with a fever of 100.4°F/38°C or higher cannot be vaccinated in a school-based vaccination clinic.

School-based H1N1 vaccination clinic best practices

Sound planning and good clinic management have helped all of HEALTH's daytime and evening school-based vaccination clinics run smoothly. Many clinic organizers have advised HEALTH of specific best practices that worked at their sites.

Daytime Clinics:

- Arrange for a substitute school nurse teacher to handle students' routine health issues.
- If additional H1N1 Vaccination Teams assist at your school, avoid overcrowding the observation area by pacing vaccine administration.
- Ensure that students leave observation areas promptly after their 15 minutes pass and don't loiter.
- Have the day's list of absences at registration tables. This will ensure that only students who are officially present for the day will be vaccinated and will prevent clinic organizers from having to search for absent students who had returned consent forms in advance.
- Set aside one or more staff members without specific assignments. They can troubleshoot.
- Use stickers or stamps to identify students who are registered for their vaccinations.
- Keep school staffers who answer parents' phone calls updated about clinic plans and policies.
- Recruit as many parent volunteers as possible.
- Keep stretchers out of site.
- Be prepared with water for volunteers.

Evening Clinics:

- **Communicate to parents plans to stagger vaccinations (e.g. "Children with last names beginning with the letters A through G will be vaccinated between 4 and 5:30 p.m.")**.
- Arrange for adequate security in your clinic's registration area, vaccine administration area and outside of your school. Security outside of your school will help address traffic-flow issues.
- Establish a separate area to vaccinate hysterical or disruptive children.
- Shield children who are awaiting vaccination from children who are receiving their shots.
- Provide an activity for children to keep them calm and occupied during their 15-minute observation periods.
- Use stickers or stamps to identify students who are registered for their vaccinations to distinguish them from siblings or other children who do not attend your school.
- Have ample school staff to register students. This will ensure an orderly registration process. In addition, familiar faces are comforts to both parents and students.
- Provide clear signage outside and inside of your school that will direct parents to specific areas.
- Be prepared with enrollment rosters at your registration tables.

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
- <http://www.flu.gov>