

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS & PUBLIC HEALTH BLOOMINGTON

NATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH WEEK APRIL 2-8, 2007

New Guidance: Community Strategies for Pandemic Influenza

The best protection against pandemic influenza—a vaccine that is well-matched to the virus causing illness—is not likely to be available at the outset of a pandemic. Community strategies that do not involve vaccines or medications (also called non-pharmaceutical interventions) may serve as a first line of defense to help delay or mitigate the spread of pandemic influenza.

In February the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) issued guidelines outlining social distancing strategies to reduce contact between people:

- closing schools
- canceling public gatherings
- planning for liberal work leave policies
- teleworking strategies
- voluntary isolation of cases
- voluntary quarantine of household contacts

Community strategies that do not involve vaccines or medications may serve as a first line of defense to help delay or mitigate the spread of pandemic influenza.

This new tool offers specific recommendations to help guide planning efforts. This guidance introduces, for the first time, the concept of a Pandemic Severity Index which will help identify interventions to use, when to use them and for how long. To minimize the economic and social costs of a pandemic, it will be important to judiciously match interventions to the pandemic severity index.

Guidance helpful for school planning

The new guidance recommendations provides and describes to schools how they might prepare for and respond to a pandemic. Bloomington, Edina and Richfield Public Schools are currently in the process of creating continuity of operations plans in the event of a pandemic. Included in their efforts are planning for prolonged periods of student dismissal and ways to provide continued instruction and other assistance to students and staff. The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) recently conducted a statewide table top exercise on school closures. MDH is in the process of developing state guidance based on the CDC's recommendations.

Increased Flu Vaccine Demand: Bloomington Public Health Responds

Following several flu related deaths in the metro area, the demand for flu immunizations dramatically increased. To meet this demand, Bloomington Public Health ramped up its immunization efforts by adding several clinics both in the evening and during the day. Schools, media, clinics and others were contacted to inform them of the additional clinics.



Karen Stanley gives a flu shot to 4 year old Brooke.

On Thursday, February 13, 345 adults and children received shots, and an additional 120 people attended the Friday flu clinic. While most were from Bloomington, Edina and Richfield, many came seeking flu shots from other cities including Shakopee, Apple Valley and others.

Overall Bloomington Public Health gave nearly 5000 flu shots during the 2006 flu season.

Faith Communities Partner in Preparedness

On March 15, the South Hennepin Parish Nurse Network Group held a Train-the-Trainer session on Personal and Family Emergency Preparedness. Bloomington Public Health trained 20 individuals from 13 different congregations from Bloomington, Edina, Richfield and Minneapolis. With this training, they will be conducting education sessions for their congregations. Each participant received a Red Cross Emergency Kit to use when giving training.

Casey Warren from Our Lady of Grace, Carol Oldowski from Nativity of Mary, and Gayle Vogel from St. Bonaventure attend Train-the-Trainer session sponsored by Bloomington Public Health.



Mass Dispensing Set-up Drill

On March 19, Bloomington Public Health set up their primary mass dispensing site in partnership with Bloomington Public Works, Emergency Management, and site security and facility staff. All patient areas were set up and evaluated. Over two dozen people from various other entities such as City of Richfield, University of Minnesota, Scott County, Dakota County, City of Minneapolis and others, walked through the clinic and provided feedback on the design layout.

The site will serve Bloomington, Edina and Richfield residents in an event that would require a large number of the population to receive medication or vaccine. The goal is to be able to serve 1000 people per hour.



Lisa Brodsky gives tours of the Mass Dispensing Site to exercise observers including Betsy Osborn and Charlie O'Brien of the City of Richfield.

New Emergency Information Phone Line For ECHO

(Emergency & Community Health Outreach)

ECHO Minnesota helps new immigrants and refugees learn about life-saving health and safety topics through ECHO TV (TPT Channel 17), Web site, and now a new, toll free, phone line.

- Call ECHO toll free phone line (1-888-883-8831).
- Log on to ECHO at www.echominnesota.org.

New program schedules for 2007 are available on the ECHO website or copies can be obtained by calling Bloomington Public Health: 952-563-8900.

Public Health Offers Psychological First Aid Training

Psychological First Aid (PFA) is a set of skills that help community members care for their family, friends, neighbors, and others. The training program instructs participants how to recognize signs of stress, and provide basic psychological support and coping skills during and after a traumatic event. PFA utilizes many skills that we already have and teaches us to use them with purpose.

Basic PFA training includes:

- Education about normal psychological responses to stressful and traumatic events
- Skills in active listening
- Understanding the importance of maintaining physical health
- Understanding when to seek help from professionals.

Who should take the training?

Neighborhood Block Captains, parish nurses, faith leaders, and others who will provide psychological support within a neighborhood, organization, or community.

Look for upcoming training opportunities soon.

City Essential Personnel Participate in "Operation Snowbaby"

Operation Snowbaby is scheduled on May 16 during the metro-wide, week-long, large-scale exercise *Operation Snowball III*. As part of the federally funded Cities Readiness Initiative, this exercise will activate a portion of the plan and distribute medication to employees in Bloomington, Edina and Richfield. Essential local government employees will be asked to complete a drug screening form and receive needed prophylaxis "medication" for themselves and their families.

In the event of an infectious disease outbreak or an actual or suspected biological release or incident, pharmaceuticals may be distributed to local government essential personnel and first responders. This will be necessary to ensure the continuation of emergency services and to maintain public safety. Once essential personnel have received medication, local public health staff will distribute medications to the general public.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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