Massachusetts Department of Public Health
Bureau of Communicable Disease Control
Division of Epidemiology and Immunization

INFLUENZA PANDEMIC PLANNING
A HIGH PRIORITY

Potential Impact of an Influenza Pandemic

An influenza pandemic occurs when a novel and highly contagious strain of the influenza virus emerges, affecting populations around the world. Three influenza pandemics occurred in the 1900's, the most severe in 1918, when 500,000 Americans dies from influenza.

Many experts consider influenza pandemics to be inevitable... yet no one knows when the next one will occur.

The impact of the next pandemic could have a devastating effect on the health and well being of the American public. We estimate that in Massachusetts alone, over the course of 6 – 8 weeks:

- Up to 4 million people may become infected
- Up to 2 million people may become ill
- Up to 1 million people may require outpatient care
- Up to 26,000 people may be hospitalized
- Up to 6,000 people may die

Planning for the next influenza pandemic will forge better communication and collaboration between the public health and emergency response sectors.

Many elements of influenza pandemic preparedness planning can be applied to planning for a bioterrorism event or other infectious disease emergency.

6 Reasons to Prepare for a Pandemic

An influenza pandemic presents challenges unlike those of any other public health emergency or community disaster.

1. There may be very little warning – less than six months from the time that a novel influenza strain is identified to the time that outbreaks begin to occur in the U.S.
2. Simultaneous outbreaks are expected to occur throughout the U.S., preventing shifts in human and material resources that occur during other natural disasters. The effect of influenza on individual communities will be relatively prolonged - weeks to months - when compared to other natural disasters.
3. Vaccines, antiviral agents and antibiotics to treat secondary infections may be in short supply.
4. Medical facilities may be quickly overwhelmed, requiring the use of non-traditional medical settings.
5. Health-care workers and other first responders may be at higher risk of exposure and illness than the general population, further impeding the care of victims.
6. Widespread illness may result in sudden and potentially significant shortages of personnel who provide critical community services: military personnel, police, fire fighters, utility workers, transportation workers, etc.

Elements of State and Local Pandemic Planning

1. **Direction and Control**

   A written Infectious Disease Emergency Plan and an established Emergency Management Team that includes public health and medical, as well as emergency response and public safety, officials will ensure effective leadership, coordination and a unified local response to the next pandemic or other infectious disease emergency.

2. **Agency-Specific Contingency Plans**

   All state and local agencies should have plans in place to ensure maintenance of essential services during periods of high-absenteeism due to illness.

3. **Systems for Vaccine Distribution**

   Communities should have written plans for the management, security and administration of vaccine to large numbers of people on potentially short notice.

4. **Establish a Team of Trained Volunteers**

   Recruiting, training and using volunteers for annual flu and other immunization clinics will ensure the availability of a cadre of trained volunteers during the next pandemic.

5. **Increase Influenza Vaccine Coverage Now**

   Ensuring annual influenza vaccination of everyone at risk for complications from influenza will improve the infrastructure for vaccine delivery and decrease the annual toll from influenza.

6. **Increase Pneumococcal Vaccine Coverage Now**

   Ensuring that everyone at risk for pneumococcal disease receives a pneumococcal vaccine will reduce some of the bacterial complications of influenza now and during the next pandemic.

Additional Resources

For more information or to obtain a template for developing a Local Influenza Pandemic Emergency Plan, please contact:

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A complete list of resources for influenza pandemic planning, and information on influenza and pneumococcal vaccines is available at www.state.ma.us/dph.

Pandemic Influenza: A Planning Guide for State and Local Officials is available at: www.cdc.gov/od/nvpo/pandemicflu.htm.

Training on Emergency Management and the Incident Command System (ICS)
The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) offers on-line courses on the ICS and other aspects of emergency planning and response at www.fema.gov/emi/ishome.htm.

The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) offers courses and workshops on emergency response. Obtain information about MEMA courses at http://www.state.ma.us/mema/training/train.htm or call 508-820-2028.