



OHIO PANDEMIC FLU

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Autumn 2006

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Editors

Moriah Needham
Ohio Department of Health
614-644-8562
*Business
*School

Sara Morman
Ohio Department of Health
614-644-8562
*Local Government
*Communities

How Ohio Communities Are Preparing**Winter Flu Approaches**

With the height of winter flu season approaching, some may wonder about the many differences between seasonal and pandemic flu. Seasonal flu follows predictable patterns usually occurring in the winter; a pandemic can happen at any time during the year and occurs rarely. During the winter flu season, the very young, elderly and those with certain underlying health conditions are at increased risk for serious complications; during a pandemic healthy people may be at increased risk for serious complications.

[Click here](#) or more information on the differences between seasonal and pandemic flu.

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Flu Shot Offers Best Protection Against Seasonal Flu

There is no pandemic flu at this time, but seasonal flu viruses still pose a threat. A flu shot would not protect you against a new flu virus that may cause an influenza pandemic, but it will help you fight off seasonal flu.

Some people, such as older people, young children and people with certain chronic health conditions, are at high risk for serious flu complications. Nationwide, seasonal flu and its complications cause some 36,000 deaths and 200,000 hospitalizations annually, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The best way to protect against seasonal flu is to get a vaccination each fall. The flu shot is a vaccine that provides protection against the flu and is given by needle in the arm. The viruses in the flu shot are killed (inactivated), so you cannot get the flu from a flu shot. The nasal-spray flu vaccine contains attenuated (weakened) live viruses and is administered by nasal sprayer to healthy people aged five to 49 years.

Testing has shown that both the flu shot and the nasal-spray vaccine are effective at preventing the flu.

The ability of flu vaccine to protect a person depends on the age and health status of the person getting the vaccine and the similarity or "match" between the virus strains in the vaccine and those in circulation.

October or November is the best time to get vaccinated, but you can still get vaccinated in December and later. Flu season can begin as early as October and last as late as May. A seasonal flu shot is not effective against a pandemic flu virus, but it may help keep your body stay healthy.

Limiting your exposure to the virus and practicing healthy habits are two ways to protect yourself and loved ones from a flu virus – seasonal or pandemic.

Good health habits include:

- Eating a balanced diet including plenty of vegetables, fruits and whole-grain products.
- Drinking plenty of water and going easy on salt, sugar, alcohol and saturated fat.
- Exercising regularly. Thirty or more minutes of physical activity most days of the week can help boost your immunity.
- Getting plenty of rest. Sleep is shown to help your body fight off illness.



Article submissions

Do you have an idea for an article? Would you like to submit an article you've already written? Contact the editors.

- Washing your hands thoroughly and often, especially before eating or cooking. Use soap and water and scrub for 20 seconds.
- Trying not to touch your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs are often spread this way.
- Staying away from people who are sick as much as you can.
- Staying home from work or school if you are sick if you are sick.



Contact your doctor's office, employer, local health department or a retailer to obtain a flu shot.

Pandemic flu plans

Want to share your plan with others in Ohio? Contact an editor.

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Best Practice - Ohio Community Service Council

Few things will affect volunteer organizations the way an influenza pandemic would. During an influenza pandemic, there will likely be fewer volunteers available because many will be home sick or caring for sick loved ones.

Upcoming events

Contact an editor if you would like us to post your upcoming pandemic influenza meeting or event on this Web site.

One organization is taking the lead on two fronts: the Ohio Community Service Council (OCSC) is working to raise awareness among volunteers and recruit medical personnel before a pandemic strikes. OCSC is a state agency supporting several different volunteer programs around the state.

OCSC Works to Build Medical Reserve Corp

Part of OCSC pandemic planning includes increased recruitment for and development of the Ohio Medical Reserve Corps (OMRC) program throughout the state. The OMRC establishes teams of local licensed volunteer medical and public health professionals who can contribute during emergencies.

To date, OCSC has OMRC units to cover more than half the counties in Ohio. OMRC volunteers also offer education and prevention services to improve the public health infrastructure in their neighborhoods.

Members are pre-identified and willing to respond to an Ohio disaster to aid in quicker and more efficient response. The OMRC is designed to track the response of credentialed volunteers for emergency relief and to facilitate state and regional planning efforts for deployment of volunteers.

Joining the OMRC

- Register at the [Ohio Medical Reserve Corps Web site](#).
- Complete an OMRC training course; OMRC credentialing will be completed as part of the registration process. The Web site above can provide training information and schedules.
- Verification of professional license will be made by Ohio Citizen Corps.
- Contact [David O'Reilly](#), (614) 995-1849 or [Paul Bender](#), (614) 728-5177 for more information.

OCSC Works to Train Volunteer Base

There are four volunteer centers around the state and all are working from one plan to prepare Ohio for a potential pandemic flu. These volunteer centers are run by the Ohio Citizen Corp Council, a program of OCSC.

The lead volunteer centers are providing technical assistance to for OMRC development and include United Way of Greater Toledo in the northwest; Mahoning County Volunteer Services in the northeast; First Link in central and southwestern Ohio; and Gallia-Jackson-Vinton RSVP and Volunteer Network Center in the southeast.

In planning for an influenza pandemic the Gallia-Jackson-Vinton RSVP and Volunteer Network Center has been busy raising awareness, training OMRC volunteers and setting up volunteer reception centers. The lead volunteer centers are also working with representatives from local health departments, emergency management agencies and other volunteer organizations around the state.

OMRC Training

Many volunteers are needed to make the OMRC operational and lead volunteer centers are providing training for medical and support personnel. Some activities include registering and credentialing medical personnel, registering volunteers and educating both groups on prevention of flu and personal protective equipment.

The Gallia-Jackson-Vinton RSVP and Volunteer Network Center has also considered ways to make it easier for Ohioans to volunteer. During a pandemic, schools may be closed and large gatherings may be cancelled for a time to slow the spread of flu.

The center is considering ways to provide child care for volunteers who may not have other ways to care for their children should a pandemic occur. The center will also register child care providers and conduct background checks before a pandemic to ensure children are safe.

Providing child care will aid in volunteer retention.

Volunteer Reception Centers

Each of the lead volunteer centers is providing training to set up volunteer reception centers in each county. A volunteer reception center is a location set up during an emergency to manage donated supplies and the flow of volunteers by interviewing, volunteering and referring them to areas where their skills are most needed.

The centers are urging counties to identify needed resources and are working to bring those resources together into one point of contact, the volunteer reception center.

According to the Gallia-Jackson-Vinton RSVP and Volunteer Network Center, volunteer reception centers need 20 to 30 people to run well. Volunteer reception centers include emergency volunteers and social service organizations which provide support for first responders. Each lead volunteer center is conducting trainings on how to set up and run volunteer centers for their area of the state.

Volunteer reception centers will also act as a safety net to identify any volunteers with a medical license who may not yet be signed up with the OMRC.

Community summits

The Gallia-Jackson-Vinton RSVP and Volunteer Network Center is working to raise awareness of pandemic flu in the community. Through community summits, the center has reached out to several different audiences to educate them about the possible disruptions a pandemic flu may cause.

During community summits, they have met with members of the banking industry, restaurants, different levels of local government, members of the newspaper industries, social service agencies, local business owners, plant operators and local community colleges.

During community summits, participants are provided with resources to begin planning for a pandemic.

[Click here](#) for more information on OCSC activities.

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Planning for a Potential Influenza Pandemic Continues

If 40 percent of state employees are home sick or caring for sick family members during an influenza pandemic, how will the State of Ohio function? That's what state agencies are currently planning for.

While continuity of operations plans have been in place at the state for some time, these traditional plans assume state facilities are unavailable. Continuity of operations for a pandemic considers something else, the likely reduction in the number of employees available.

Several state agencies recently completed plans outlining their response to an influenza pandemic earlier this year. Now, all state agencies are working together to assure minimum essential functions continue in their respective agencies.

In late March, Governor Bob Taft issued a cabinet advisory asking state agencies to develop continuity of operations plans specific to a pandemic. Once agency plans were reviewed, an executive order was issued in August establishing the Pandemic Influenza State Services Advisory Council (PISSAC).

The council, comprised of representatives from the Governor's and Attorney General's offices and the departments of Administrative Services, Health, Budget and Management and Public Safety, provided additional guidance for state agencies to address in the plans.

The overall goal of the pandemic flu continuity of operations plans is to ensure delivery of essential services. State agencies are identifying essential and non-essential roles for employees. Employees not working on essential functions may be designated to act in common support duties to fulfill the state mission.

The PISSAC is responsible for overseeing and coordinating state agency pandemic influenza continuity of operations plans. Plans are currently undergoing a second review and will be revised as needed. In the future, PISSAC will consider what if any legislative changes need to be considered and will begin exercising state agency plans.

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Protecting Special Needs Populations During a Pandemic

During a pandemic, supply chains may break down, access to outpatient medical treatments may be limited and hospitals likely will reach full capacity quickly. For Ohioans with physical, medical or mental disabilities, emergencies present unique challenges.

Special Needs Planning for Organizations

Organizations working with special needs populations should plan now to continue providing supplies and services during a pandemic. Protecting vulnerable special needs populations during a pandemic requires careful planning.

A first step in planning for special needs populations during a pandemic is to identify those who may receive services or supplies through your organization. Second, work with local disability organizations to identify clusters of people with disabilities. Finally, prepare a voluntary special needs registry if you do not yet have one for your organization. A registry is a listing of people who meet specified criteria who may need assistance during a potential pandemic.

Special Needs Planning for People With Disabilities

Individual preparedness can also help keep people with disabilities safe during an emergency. Planning ahead provides the best protection when disaster strikes.

First, create a personal support network, or if you know someone who has special needs, offer to be a part of their network. Second, complete a personal assessment. [Click here](#) for a personal assessment questionnaire.

Be sure to discuss emergency plans with family, friends, personal care attendants and anyone else in your support network.

Resources

Representatives from the Ohio departments of Aging, Health and Job & Family Services are working together on a special needs workgroup as part of the Ohio Department of Health's Pandemic Flu Planning Task Force. If you have information you would like to share with this work group contact [James Bryant, M.D.](#)

To begin preparing, more information is available on the [National Organization on Disability](#) and [American Red Cross](#) Web sites.

Portions of this article were taken from the National Organization on Disability and the American Red Cross Web sites.

[Click here](#) for more complete information about planning for people with disabilities.

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An Introduction to Incident Command System

Many local chapters of the American Red Cross utilize the Incident Command System (ICS) to organize their response to disasters. Here's some background on ICS and why organizations such as the Red Cross, State of Ohio, most emergency responders and many others utilize it during emergency situations.

ICS is a structure used to respond to events; most often they are unplanned such as fires, floods or disease outbreaks. It can, however, be used during planned events if need be. Think of it as a standardized way to manage staff and resources.

ICS is used in the United States and other countries to organize responses and was designed to meet these four challenges:

- Meet the response needs of incidents of any kind or size.
- Allow personnel from a variety of agencies to meld rapidly into a common management structure.
- Provide logistical and administrative support to operational staff.
- Be cost effective by avoiding duplication of efforts.

ICS can be scaled to any size and applied to a wide range of incidents. Examples include:

- Fire, both structural and wildland.
- Medical, when there are multiple patients.
- Inter-agency, where different agencies must work together.
- Natural disasters such as tornadoes, floods, ice storms or earthquakes.
- Human, animal and plant disease outbreaks (*such as a flu pandemic*).
- Search and rescue missions.
- Hazardous materials incidents.
- Criminal acts and crime scene investigations.
- Terrorist incidents including the use of weapons of mass destruction.
- National Special Security Events such as presidential visits or the Super Bowl.
- Other planned events such as parades or demonstrations.

Given the magnitude of these events, it's not always possible for any one agency to handle the management and resource needs. Partnerships are often required among local, state, tribal and federal agencies. These partners must work together in a smooth, coordinated effort under the same management system. ICS is that standardized, on-scene, all-hazard incident management concept.

ICS allows users to adopt an integrated organizational structure to match the complexities and demands of single incident or multiple incidents without being hindered by jurisdictional boundaries. This flexibility makes it a very cost effective and efficient management approach for both small and large situations.

ICS consists of procedures for controlling personnel, facilities, equipment and communications. It is a system designed to be used or applied from the time an incident occurs until the requirement for integrated management and operations no longer exists.

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Web Site Highlights

If you haven't discovered the [publication library](#) yet, check it out. All publications are listed on this page for download, some with areas you can customize for your organization's members. All of these documents are public and free for you to use.

A page has been created that offers documents in Spanish and links to sites providing health and pandemic flu information [in Spanish](#).

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