

Spring 2007

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Best Practices

Send your best practices to [Sara Morman](#).

Local governments prepare for specific groups and the general public

Best Practice - Hamilton County Reaches Out to Faith-based Organizations

The Hamilton County General Health District in conjunction with the Cincinnati, Norwood, Sharonville and Springdale health departments recently conducted a series of planning forums for area faith-based organizations.

Forum objectives included:

1. Determining communications channels with public health in advance of an emergency.
2. Describing local health authority and expectations related to possible closures and restrictions on public gatherings.
3. Sharing prevention methods developed by faith leaders in Hamilton County that could be used to reduce illness within a congregation now and in the event of a pandemic.

Morning and evening sessions were held at different locations around Hamilton County. After a brief presentation, participants were provided with materials developed by the Pandemic Influenza Faith Advisory Committee.

Recognizing the importance of including faith-based organizations in pandemic planning, the local health departments formed the committee in October 2006. The committee is comprised of representatives from churches and other faith-based organizations in Hamilton County.

Presentation materials from the faith forums are available at www.hamiltoncountyhealth.org. Contact Susan Schaefer, susan.schaefer@hamilton-co.org, with questions about the forums or materials.

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Best Practice - Central Ohio Public Information Network

Submitted by Kimberly J. Smith, Health Communication Specialist - Pandemic Flu Planning

Franklin County Board of Health

Franklin County Board of Health and Columbus Public Health have partnered with more than 60 agencies to form the Central Ohio Public Information Network for Pandemic Flu (COPIN). The group has been meeting for more than a year, planning and preparing for communications needs during an influenza pandemic.

COPIN's main goal is to provide public information about the measures taken to best protect the health and welfare of the community during a pandemic. COPIN's objectives are to:

- Inform the public about actions taken and actions they need to take.
- Create confidence in local response efforts.
- Speak with a consistent voice.
- Release accurate, complete and timely information as soon as possible.

COPIN is divided into four subcommittees including the Health Alert Network (HAN) subcommittee, Hotline subcommittee, Joint Information Center (JIC) Logistics subcommittee and Message Development subcommittee.

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Article submissions

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

Pandemic flu plans

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

Upcoming events

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

The HAN subcommittee is contracting with a Web-based system that will allow users to manage their own contact information. Alerts will be sent via email, fax and telephone. The Web-based system will be used mainly for stakeholder notification.

The Hotline subcommittee developed a hotline that will allow the public to call during a pandemic to have both medical and general questions answered. The hotline is designed to minimize non emergency calls to 911 and utilizes existing systems in the community. The hotline uses systems that already exist, specifically the local FirstLink and City call centers.

The JIC Logistics subcommittee is planning and gathering the materials needed in Franklin County's JIC. The JIC is a central location for all response agencies to meet and work together to ensure unified action and consistent information. Members are also planning for the possibility of virtual (i.e., electronic) JIC and virtual media briefings.

The Message Development subcommittee coordinates most of the written communication required for COPIN's pandemic flu planning. This subcommittee writes the news releases, fliers and brochures used to inform the public on how to prepare for a flu pandemic. In addition to the work of these subcommittees, COPIN created a Web site specifically for pandemic flu planning in central Ohio, www.columbuspandemicflu.com.

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Central Region Conducts Multi County Exercise

The Central Region conducted a functional pandemic flu exercise Feb. 8. Fairfield, Fayette, Knox and Licking were player counties.



(from l to r): Susan Tilgner, health commissioner, Franklin County Health Department; Rick Roush, emergency preparedness coordinator, Franklin County Health Department; Deborah Cox, regional public health preparedness coordinator, Central Ohio Region; and Don Schwind, police chief, Sharon Township, discuss the players' progress during the central region exercise.



The central region exercise had 185 participants from 55 partner agencies.

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Community Containment – Historical Evidence it Works

Health experts tell us it will almost certainly be several months after the start of an influenza pandemic before adequate supplies of vaccine are ready. In the meantime, all of us will need to take other precautions to help ensure we don't get exposed to the flu virus. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have given a name to the various protective activities that do not include vaccine – they are nonpharmaceutical interventions.

One such intervention is called "community containment." While the term may sound as though it's from an urban planner's drawing board, it's actually a collection of effective methods to reduce the spread of the flu during a pandemic.

Essentially, community containment has four parts. Current research and historical review of the 1918 pandemic show that using four interventions together early in the pandemic is effective at reducing the number of cases. The four parts of the modern-day community containment plan are (a) keeping sick people away from those who are not ill; (b) having those who are well voluntarily stay home if a family member is sick with flu; (c) temporarily dismissing school and keeping children from gathering; and (d) avoiding large crowds when possible.

The decision to limit public gatherings, stagger work shifts, close schools and cancel other functions and isolate those who were sick had a beneficial effect during the 1918 pandemic. The

key to the actions' success; however, was when they began.

Two days or two weeks? Big difference.

Recent studies funded by the National Institutes of Health reviewed the sickness and death rates from flu during the 1918 pandemic along with a search of newspaper archives and found some fascinating results. The research looked at more than a dozen U.S. cities to see which community containment measures were implemented and what the sickness and death rates were.

Both studies found a correlation between how quickly the restrictions on gathering and other interventions were put in place and a lower peak death rate. Put simply, fast action saves lives. For example, one set of researchers looked at 16 U.S. cities including St. Louis and Philadelphia. Within two days of the first reported cases of influenza, officials in St. Louis put into action a series of measures to reduce close gatherings of people. Other cities including Philadelphia implemented similar restrictions but waited as long as two weeks to do so; Philadelphia even permitted a parade to take place before curbing gatherings.

The peak death rate in Philadelphia was eight times that of St. Louis.

Community containment - How long should it be?

Research shows past pandemics appear to move through communities in waves; the 1918 pandemic occurred both in spring and autumn. The second study looked at how long cities put community containment measures in place and the effects of the disease in those places where restrictions were relaxed between waves of illness.

Cities that relaxed their restrictions often saw infections increase, thus creating the second disease wave. The study analyzed the influenza death rate in San Francisco from 1918 and 1919 and concluded if the city had not relaxed restrictions, the death rate may have been reduced by more than 90 percent.

Both studies bring evidence the modern-day recommendations from CDC should provide a degree of protection until adequate supplies of vaccine are ready.

Want to know more?

Read about community containment and other recommendations from CDC at:
<http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/community/mitigation.html>

Read the two research studies of the 1918 pandemic and community containment efforts shown to slow the spread of the disease.

[Public Health Interventions and Epidemic Intensity during the 1918 Influenza Pandemic](#)

[The Effect of Public Health Measures on the 1918 Influenza Pandemic in U.S. Cities](#)

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CDC Issues Guidance for Masks

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently issued guidance for use of masks during an influenza pandemic. The guidance stresses the necessity of using other preventive measures such as hand washing and social distancing in conjunction with the limited use of masks. The best way to avoid contracting a pandemic strain of influenza virus before vaccine is developed is to avoid others.

Following are links and information from CDC:

Community Settings

[Interim Public Health Guidance for the Use of Facemasks and Respirators in Non-Occupational Community Settings during an Influenza Pandemic](#)

Provides recommendations of when to use each device, in conjunction with other prevention actions, such as hand washing, covering coughs and avoiding crowds.

[Summary of Mask guidance](#)

Workplace Settings

[PDF - 313KB](#) (Occupational Safety & Health Administration)

Provides guidance and recommendations on infection control in the workplace including information on proper mask and respirator use.

Health Care Settings

[Interim Guidance on Planning for the Use of Surgical Masks and Respirators in Health Care Settings during an Influenza Pandemic](#)

Provides background information on influenza transmission, pathogenesis and control. Gives recommendations on kinds of mask and respirators, as well as their proper use.

ODH Department Operations Center Complete

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently exercised its national pandemic influenza operations plan. The exercise took place over two days and involved the Ohio, Arkansas and Florida state health departments. The three states served as simulators to add to the realism of the exercise.

The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) used the opportunity to orient staff to the newly created ODH Department Operations Center (DOC). During the exercise, ODH staff reviewed DOC procedures and evaluated DOC resources, technology and support functions.



Ohio Department of Health (ODH) partners become oriented to the ODH Department Operation Center during a CDC exercise April 25 – 26.

By providing realistic simulated problems to CDC, staff members were able to experience potential roles and duties during the course of a flu pandemic and review the ODH pandemic influenza response plan. Members of City of Columbus and Cuyahoga and Franklin County local health departments also participated. Representatives from other partner agencies included Shoshanna Shelton, The Ohio State University Center for Public Health Preparedness; Bob Armstrong, The Ohio State University emergency coordinator; Bobbie Erlwein, CDC; and Matthew Pitts, United State Public Health Service.

The ODH DOC will be used during public health emergencies to enhance a coordinated response by the agency.

Summary of the Ohio Department of Health's Pandemic Flu Planning

There were three pandemics in the last century and experts believe it is just a matter of time before the next. The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) has two key goals. The first is helping Ohioans prepare for a pandemic now and the second is being ready to slow the spread of the disease when the pandemic begins, when a vaccine is unavailable and antiviral medicines are in short supply.

Protecting Ohioans

Recognizing the importance of "buying time" at the start of a pandemic, ODH continues to develop a community containment plan to limit transmission of the flu virus. A draft plan will be submitted to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) March 1; future versions of the plan will reflect feedback from our Ohio partners.

To help protect Ohioans who become ill with the pandemic strain of flu, the Ohio General Assembly appropriated \$17 million to purchase antiviral medicines. These medicines will be securely stored in the state for rapid distribution when needed. ODH's draft plan for antiviral use adopts the CDC recommendations: using antiviral medicines for treatment to prevent deaths and decrease the severity of the illness.

ODH is working to protect Ohio's most vulnerable residents. ODH is now identifying alternatives and resources for those in need of dialysis, prescription medicines and home care supplies. ODH is drafting a plan to help immunocompromised populations and is also developing a general response plan to provide local health departments a model to address special needs populations in their area. With the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services, ODH completed a plan for migrant populations and has worked with the Ohio Legal Rights Council to distribute a special needs emergency planning booklet.

To effectively prepare for a pandemic, Ohio's governments, businesses, community organizations and families must have science's best and latest information about the disease. ODH has focused significant time and effort ensuring our partners and Ohio residents are well informed about pandemic influenza and what the State of Ohio is doing to prepare. After hosting a statewide planning summit in February 2006, ODH launched an interagency "one-stop" Web site <http://www.ohiopandemicflu.gov>. ODH publishes quarterly planning newsletters for businesses, schools, local government and faith-based and community organizations. ODH has conducted various print and broadcast paid media campaigns informing Ohioans what they can do to prepare for pandemic flu and other emergencies. An informational video DVD and several thousand copies of printed information (e.g., fact sheets, guides) on avian, seasonal and

pandemic flu were distributed at the Ohio State Fair. ODH continues to receive requests for these materials and distributes them upon request.

Assisting the Medical Community

During an influenza pandemic, the number of patients will likely overwhelm health care resources quickly. ODH is collaborating with medical partners on medical surge issues by determining what needs to be addressed in anticipation of an increased demand on medical services (med surge) during an influenza pandemic. To this end, ODH has established a Medical Surge Committee; partners participating on the committee include long-term care, primary care providers and institutions, free clinics, hospitals, Ohio National Guard, Ohio EMA, health professional boards, home care, Ohio Division of EMS, Ohio Department of Mental Health, Ohio Department of Youth Services, and Ohio Department of Corrections. The Medical Surge Committee is working on the following tasks:

1. Scope of practice issues: Develop tiers of care when resources are scarce along with altered standards of care guidance, including how implementation should be communicated.
2. Ethical issues: Develop guidance document to assist decision making regarding when and how scarce resources are allocated – use a public process to discuss putting values on lives based on the likely ability to save the greatest number of individuals.
3. Legal issues: Draft language for inclusion in the Ohio Revised Code to create immunity or assume liability for health care providers practicing under altered standards of care when declared by the State of Ohio.
4. Insurance/reimbursement issues: Assure coverage under private insurance irrespective of where care is provided; Address malpractice insurance considerations.
5. Hospital and community issues: Determine hospital capacity (e.g., bed capacity, negative airflow room capacity and number of ventilators). ODH has purchased more than 500 ventilators (used to help the patients breathe) for use during a pandemic and is developing a distribution plan with regional hospital coordinators and other designated medical professionals (e.g., respiratory therapists) to guide placement at sites throughout Ohio
6. Public information and guidance: Develop instructions for families who will care for their sick at home.

Internal Preparations

With the creation of an on-site department operations center, ODH will be able to operate from one location and more easily gather and disseminate crucial information. Policies and procedures for the department operations center are nearly complete.

ODH utilizes the nationally-adopted and standardized incident command system (ICS) during substantial public health events. During a pandemic, up to 40 percent of employees may be home sick or caring for sick family members. By this summer, all ODH employees will be trained on ICS, as well as the National Incident Management System and the National Response Plan. Upon completion of this training, ODH's table of organization for pandemic influenza will be three-deep with employees trained to serve in identified capacities.

ODH developed a business continuity plan, identifying its critical business functions and developing strategies to ensure that they can continue. This required looking at not only the physical needs of each business function but the personnel needs since pandemic influenza will impact. ODH, DAS and Ohio EMA then worked with the other state agencies to insure that all state agencies had a workable plan. These plans were exercised with the Governor's office in June and again in November 2006.

Because of the large number of deaths possible during a pandemic, fatality management is an important issue. ODH has implemented a new electronic death registry system.

Support Agency Functions

ODH serves as a support agency on other projects related to an influenza pandemic. ODH is working with the Ohio Community Service Council on volunteer management and donations and mass care; all state agencies on continuity of operations planning for a pandemic; and the Ohio Emergency Management Agency on mass fatality planning and community recovery and mitigation.

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FDA Approves First U.S. Vaccine for Humans Against the Avian Influenza Virus H5N1

On April 17, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved a vaccine for humans against the H5N1 influenza virus, commonly known as avian or bird flu.

According to the FDA, the vaccine could be used in the event the current H5N1 avian virus was

to develop into a pandemic strain. That is, has the capability to efficiently spread from human to human, resulting in the rapid spread of the disease around the globe. Should such an influenza pandemic emerge, this vaccine may provide early, limited protection in the months before a vaccine tailored to the pandemic strain of the virus was developed and mass produced.

Because it could take months for a vaccine specific to the pandemic strain of the virus to be mass produced, it is important to take actions to prepare and prevent for a flu pandemic. One of these actions is to begin stockpiling food, medicines and goods for an extended stay at home in the event of school closures and cancellations of public gatherings. Developing healthy habits like hand washing, covering coughs and sneezes and staying home when sick could help Ohioans prevent contracting or spreading illnesses. Making daily healthy choices like eating a balanced diet, exercising regularly and getting plenty of sleep could help prevent illness.

The H5N1 virus is one type of the influenza A virus commonly found in birds. Unlike seasonal human influenza, where symptoms range from mild to serious in most people, when humans become infected with the highly pathogenic avian H5N1 virus, the illness is far more severe and happens quickly, with pneumonia and multi organ failure commonly seen. While there have been no reported human cases of the highly pathogenic H5N1 virus in the United States, almost 300 people worldwide have been infected with this virus since 2003 and more than half of them have died. To date, H5N1 influenza has remained primarily a bird disease but should the virus acquire the ability for sustained transmission among humans, people will have little immunity to this virus and an influenza pandemic would have grave consequences for global public health.

“The timing and severity of an influenza pandemic is uncertain, but the danger remains very real,” said Jesse L. Goodman, M.D., M.P.H., director of FDA’s Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research in an FDA press release. “We are working closely with other government agencies, global partners and the vaccine industry to facilitate the development, licensure and availability of needed supplies of safe and effective vaccines to protect against the pandemic threat.”

With the support of FDA, the National Institutes of Health and other government agencies, sanofi pasteur and other manufacturers are working to develop the next generation of influenza vaccines for enhanced immune responses at lower doses, using technologies intended to boost the immune response. Meanwhile, the approval and availability of this vaccine will enhance national readiness and the nation’s ability to protect those at increased risk of exposure.

For more information, [visit the FDA Web site](#).

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Resources for Local Pandemic Flu Planning

As part of the Ohio Department of Health’s (ODH) communications plan, the Office of Public Affairs is printing educational materials and running a statewide media campaign this summer to supplement local health departments’ efforts. In the fall materials will be shipped to every local health department later this year. Quantities are based on the health jurisdiction’s population served.

An online survey completed by public health professionals such as health commissioners, health educators, nurses and epidemiologists indicates Ohio health departments are actively engaged in their communities’ pandemic flu planning and those activities could be boosted with additional materials. The kit will include brochures, fact sheets, emergency planning booklets, posters, vinyl clings and coloring calendars for children. ODH will have extra copies of materials available to community groups, schools and businesses by request until supplies are depleted. Be sure to contact your local health department to get involved in their planning efforts.

ODH also has surplus copies of the [Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Guide for Retail Food Establishments](#) developed in partnership with the Ohio Food Industry Foundation. This was a statewide effort to assist grocers in planning for an influenza pandemic and was distributed to more than 14,000 retail food establishments in 2006. Bundles of 50 are available [by sending an e-mail](#) indicating the number of bundles requested and your shipping address.

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