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CDC Awards New Mexico H1N1 Funding to Prepare for Fall

SANTA FE – Governor Bill Richardson announced today that the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently awarded New Mexico \$1.67 million to help New Mexico prepare for H1N1 mass vaccination clinics and a potential increase in H1N1 influenza cases this fall.

“While health officials can’t predict this year’s flu season, we are working hard to make sure New Mexico is prepared to respond to a potential increase in H1N1 flu cases and a change in severity,” Governor Richardson said.

The New Mexico Department of Health plans to use the funding to improve monitoring of influenza illness, enhance H1N1 investigations, expand laboratory resources and establish storage and shipping of vaccine and antiviral medications.

The Department has multiple divisions planning for a potential increase in influenza this fall, including the Epidemiology and Response Division’s Bureau of Health Emergency Management, which is the lead for distributing antivirals, and the Public Health Division, which is in charge of vaccines. The Department is working on increasing the number of clinics and laboratories reporting influenza, tracking vaccine and vaccine supplies, enhancing electronic laboratory reporting and collaborating with other laboratories to ensure timely influenza diagnoses.

“Our Scientific Laboratory Division is using the funding to get additional equipment, supplies and instrumentation to meet a potential four-fold increase in the volume the scientists normally handle during an influenza season,” said Health Secretary Alfredo Vigil, MD. “Our epidemiologists are focusing on making sure we immediately investigate any changes in severity of influenza illness in New Mexico.”

New Mexico expects to receive an additional \$577,000 from the U.S. Health and Human Services Department that will primarily go to hospitals to help them prepare for a potential surge in demand for their services.

The Department of Health is planning mass vaccination clinics for H1N1 influenza when vaccine becomes available. The CDC expects to begin shipping vaccine as early as mid-October, but it

could arrive in New Mexico later in the fall or winter. This year, people need to get vaccinated against H1N1 flu and seasonal flu.

CDC's Advisory Committee recently issued recommendations about priority groups for H1N1 vaccination. The recommendations target people who are the most likely to develop complications from H1N1 flu and or spread the disease to vulnerable individuals. They are:

- Pregnant women
- People who live with or care for children younger than 6 months old
- Children and young adults age 6 months through 24 years
- Healthcare workers and emergency services personnel
- People age 25 through 64 years who have health conditions associated with higher risk of medical complications from influenza

Due to the increase in the number of vaccinations needed this fall, the Department is recruiting volunteer healthcare professionals who can help with vaccination clinics or to potentially respond to an emergency. To volunteer, look up <http://www.nmserves.org/> or call Bobbie MacKenzie at 505-476-8302.

So far, there have been no deaths due to H1N1 in New Mexico. For information on H1N1, look up <http://www.nmhealth.org/FLU/seasonal/h1n1.html>.

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