

MEMORANDUM

TO: Health Care Providers

FROM: Damon T. Arnold, M.D., M.P.H.
Director

DATE: November 17, 2009

RE: Private Provider H1N1 Vaccine Distribution Explanation

When the initial H1N1 vaccine supplies were allocated in mid-October by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) sent those limited doses to providers who would be conducting clinics open to all members of the public, including the underinsured or uninsured, and health care workers. Among those receiving H1N1 vaccine were the state's 95 certified local health departments (LHDs) and hospitals outside the city of Chicago. CDC is shipping H1N1 vaccine for Chicago residents directly to the Chicago Department of Public Health.

LHDs were chosen to ensure vaccine would be available at public clinics for all priority groups. Hospitals were selected so health care workers and their priority group patients could be vaccinated, which, in turn, protects other vulnerable hospitalized patients. Others receiving initial supplies of H1N1 vaccine were Federally Qualified Healthcare Centers and university health centers.

IDPH began processing orders Wednesday, November 4, for direct shipment to private providers in high population areas who serve the targeted priority groups identified by CDC. By allocating H1N1 vaccine to these providers, including, but not limited to, obstetricians/gynecologists and pediatricians, the vaccine is now available in more locations and eases the demands on LHDs and hospitals. Contrary to rumors that have been circulating, IDPH has not yet supplied H1N1 vaccine to retail pharmacies.

Only private providers who have signed provider agreements with IDPH are eligible to receive direct shipment of the H1N1 vaccine or to receive the transfer of vaccine from other authorized providers. A minimum of 100 doses must be ordered to receive a direct shipment. Private providers requesting less than 100 doses can contact their respective local health department to discuss the possible transfer of H1N1 vaccine.

Although the overall H1N1 vaccine supply is improving, there is – and will continue to be – a difference in supply versus demand. To date, IDPH has been allocated 1.7 million doses of H1N1 vaccine for a population of more than 10 million people residing outside of Chicago. There simply is not enough vaccine available yet to meet the demands for all those requesting supply. As additional allocations of H1N1 vaccine are made available by CDC, IDPH will place orders for those providers previously mentioned, as well as expand the number of private providers who are sent supplies.

As you might surmise, H1N1 vaccine distribution is a complex and time-consuming process. Staff must daily review the various allocations of H1N1 vaccine allocated to the state -- live attenuated virus vaccine, multi-dose vials, pre-filled syringes, pediatric doses, thimerosal-free vaccine – and match those vaccine types with the orders previously submitted by thousands of providers across the state. Due to the limited H1N1 vaccine supply, IDPH can only fill partial orders.

As the H1N1 vaccine supply situation improves, more people in the priority groups will be able to get vaccinated and do so with greater ease. Eventually, there will be enough H1N1 vaccine available for anyone who wants it. Thank you for your understanding, patience and assistance as we address this serious public health threat.

If you have questions about H1N1 vaccine allocation and distribution or other H1N1-related questions, contact your local health department or IDPH at 217-785-1455.

Cc: Local health departments
Hospitals