

**Jefferson County Health Department  
H1N1 Response Strategies:  
Facing the difficulties in reaching the CDC targeted Tier I populations**

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The H1N1 virus, previously known as the “Swine” flu, was confirmed in Jefferson County Ohio in May of 2009. Since May, the county has a handful of confirmed H1N1 cases and the virus has been widespread throughout the state of Ohio. The Jefferson County Health Department, in adjunction with the City of Steubenville Health Department, has teamed up with Trinity Health System in an order to educate and promote prevention measures of H1N1 to the general population. Jefferson County, according to the 2001 census report, has a total population base of 73,894 and it is estimated that 19.2% of that population are persons 65 years of age and older. As H1N1 vaccine became available in October to both health departments within the county, adaptations in previously written emergency response plans were made. In an effort to reach the targeted Tier I populations designated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Jefferson County Health Department conducted specialized H1N1 flu clinics.

**Adapted vaccination strategies and/or public communication as a result of demand exceeding vaccine supply.**

The Jefferson County Health Department received its first shipment of the H1N1 vaccine on October 13, 2009. At this point in time, the department was the only provider of H1N1 nasal spray in the county. Weeks prior to the arrival of vaccine new response plans were implemented to address the Tier I priority groups. From September to November regularly monthly meetings with County School Superintendents about school-based clinics for each school building in the county were conducted and furthermore conducted one on one meetings with each building principal. A H1N1 flu shot survey & vaccine administration permission slips were distributed to each school district. In response to the survey a tentative schedule was put together to target school-aged children. Unpredictably, the amount of vaccine received fell well short of the demand for the vaccine. Current plans were then altered to address the current situation. The department chose to move forward and vaccinate children ages 4 through 19 in each district at a centrally located school based evening clinic for students that attended that school district. The department hosted two H1N1 clinics a week. Student nurses from the local community college and local University volunteered to screen, educate, and vaccinate patients. On October 19<sup>th</sup> the department hosted its first H1N1 nasal spray clinic at a local community college for EMS/Healthcare workers, which was not as successful as predicted due to the amount of individuals afraid to get the live attenuated nasal spray vaccine. As more inactivated vaccine became available the department began offering the shot at H1N1 evening clinics only to those who did not meet the requirements for the nasal spray in the Tier I priority groups. On November 4<sup>th</sup> the department began its first H1N1 school based clinic and wrapped up the districts by November 12<sup>th</sup>. Additional clinics for other Tier I groups were also conducted, even special clinics for deaf and hard of hearing individuals as well as pregnant women that obtained a prescription from their OB-GYN physician.

The Jefferson County Health Department conducted a “Spread Good Habits” campaign starting in October. Billboards, television commercials, newspaper articles, and radio commercials were conducted to promote education and public awareness of basic flu prevention measures. The

departments website was updated weekly to address questions and concerns about the virus and also linked viewers to the CDC's website and the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) website for additional resources. Many special interest groups requested additional information and presentations about the H1N1 flu and vaccine, so several PowerPoint presentations were conducted to educate these individuals. The local television station conducted a H1N1 hotline, several local hospital representatives and the health department were present to answer callers questions and concerns. Due to numerous phone calls coming into the department a H1N1 hotline was added to the department's phone system. Television commercials & newspaper ads advertised clinic dates, times, and locations. Since April, monthly meetings have been conducted with local partners in order to plan, prepare, and update businesses about the virus.

**Reached or had challenges reaching priority groups within traditionally underserved populations, e.g., those who are non-English-speaking, African Americans, Latinos and other ethnic minorities, low income, homeless or runaway, disabled, or chronically ill;**

The Jefferson County Health Department has coordinated with special population organizations to reach these represented individuals. The county has a small percentage at 3.8% of non-English speaking populations. For those who speak a different language or cannot speak/hear, we have met with program coordinators within the county to reach these individuals. We have done outreach clinics to residents & students of the Jefferson County Board of Disabilities, pregnant women, deaf & hard of hearing community, and we offer the vaccine in the office during clinic days to anyone that meets the criteria. The department has been in contact with the County's Head Start program coordinator and homeless shelter directors discussing scheduled clinic dates, times, and locations.

**How you are responding to vaccine safety or efficacy concerns on the part of providers or community members.**

The Jefferson County Health Department has received numerous phone calls and has been approached directly by people during clinics about the safety of the vaccine. Department staff has been advised to educate callers or persons asking about the safety, ensuring that it is FDA approved and was produced in the same manner as the seasonal flu vaccine. Also, they are encouraged to advise these individuals to visit the CDC's [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov) and the FDA's [www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov) website for additional information.