



# KANSAS

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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT

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Dear School Official,

This Action Kit is designed to provide you with practical tools you and your staff can use to prepare for an outbreak of pandemic influenza. While presently there is no pandemic flu in the United States, public health authorities consider the threat to be real. The threat ranges from a pandemic at the level of the 1960's "Asian Flu" to that of the 1918 "Spanish Flu." It is not a matter of if a influenza pandemic will occur, but when.

It is important to understand that every year a large number of people get sick with seasonal influenza and around 36,000 people in the United States die annually from seasonal flu. Many of the tools in this Kit were designed for and can be used for seasonal flu, as flu viruses causing pandemics are transmitted, treated, and controlled by the same mechanisms as the seasonal flu virus. Flu vaccines are also effective ways to prevent people from getting sick with seasonal flu, however; at present there are limited vaccines for viruses thought to represent a potential threat.

At this time, there is also an avian/bird flu (H5N1) virus circulating in several countries. It is not in the United States now but is thought to be the most likely candidate for causing a pandemic at present. When cases of any bird flu are identified in the United States, there may be confusion and concern; however, the presence of the virus in birds doesn't necessarily mean there will be human cases. There also is no conclusive evidence that the disease spreads easily from person-to-person at this time.

At some point, whether it is the H5N1 or another virus, health experts believe that there will be a new virus that spreads easily among people for which most people have no immunity and for which there is no vaccine. When that happens and people begin to get sick, we will have a flu pandemic. There is a great deal of planning for this pandemic underway at the federal, state and local level. The tools in this binder will help your school begin planning and preparedness efforts. They should also help parents and families begin their preparations. As a bonus, you will find that many of these tools can also be helpful in the creation of foundational elements of emergency preparedness planning that will be useful in any situation.

We hope you will work with us and help us educate the community about the importance of preparation. Please adapt this document to your local needs in whatever way you deem best and contact your local health department to coordinate your actions. We are all engaged in planning for the unexpected and your health department can provide you with assistance in your efforts.

Sincerely,

  
Howard Rodenberg M.D. M.P.H.  
Director, Division of Health

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