

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HEALTH DEPARTMENT ORGANIZES H1N1 TASKFORCE

On September 1st, President Obama called on Americans to take steps to help contain the expected impact of H1N1 (swine) flu. It is predicted that the number of influenza cases could intensify during the upcoming months and it is extremely important that we be prepared by staying updated on the latest developments and recommendations to prevent the spread of illness from occurring in our community. According to a recent planning scenario issued by the President's Council of Advisers on Science and Technology, half of Americans could be infected with the H1N1 virus and as many as 90,000 could die, more than double the typical death toll from seasonal flu. It is anticipated that overcrowding at hospitals, school closures, disruptions in businesses and services, could occur in our own communities if we are not prepared.

The Kanawha-Charleston Health Department (KCHD) has been working effortlessly since April to plan for the upcoming influenza season. Dr. Rahul Gupta, Health Officer for KCHD reports that the Health Department has been monitoring the situation since the onset and has already begun meeting with hospitals, county school officials, community groups, the business community and others to coordinate our response. Dr. Gupta stated that with the CDC predicting an increase in the number of flu cases this season due to the H1N1 influenza virus, it could impact entire communities.

Next week, the Kanawha-Charleston Health Department in collaboration with the Kanawha County Commission and the City of Charleston, will be hosting a H1N1 health symposium and has invited community members from hospitals, schools, colleges, other healthcare agencies, emergency service providers, and community business leaders, in addition to city and county government officials, to learn more about the formation of the Taskforce.

Dr. Gupta stated, "I was very pleased when Commissioner Carper approached us on forming a county-wide H1N1 Taskforce. It is very important for public officials to realize the potential effects of a flu outbreak. We have the support of the County Commission and the City of Charleston's Mayor, Danny Jones."

The symposium will be held on Tuesday, September 8th from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., at the Charleston Civic Center. More than one hundred individuals have been invited to receive an overview of the H1N1 task force planning efforts as well as have an opportunity to represent their agencies

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