

Date: 8 February 2010

To: NM School Nurses  
NM School Administrators

From: Dr. Mary Ramos  
Office of School and Adolescent Health, New Mexico Department of Health

Re: **Continued H1N1 vaccination efforts still needed**

I am writing to thank all of you for the tremendous work that has been done in schools and communities across this state to protect our school children from H1N1 influenza through vaccination. Vaccination is safe, effective, available, and is key to our defense against the flu.

I want to remind all of us that we should not let our guard down just yet. H1N1 influenza continues to be the predominant influenza virus circulating in our communities. The recent death of a 3-year-old boy from Otero County serves as a terrible reminder that H1N1 flu is still circulating in New Mexico and can still cause serious harm. H1N1 disease has been declining, but New Mexicans are hospitalized every week, and people continue to die from influenza complications. At this time we cannot say for sure whether or not there will be another wave of increased H1N1 influenza activity. A third wave has occurred during previous pandemics.

Getting vaccinated is still the best protection. **Parents, school children, family members, and other school community members should be encouraged to get vaccinated against H1N1 influenza if they have not already done so.** Children who are younger than 10 years of age need 2 doses to be fully protected from the H1N1 virus. Doses should be given at least 4 weeks apart. Those with chronic diseases are especially at risk for severe influenza illness and should be protected with vaccination. In New Mexico, children younger than five have the highest rate of hospitalizations, and people 50 to 64 have the highest death rate.

H1N1 vaccine is available throughout the state. People can go to: [http://www.health.state.nm.us/H1N1/immunization\\_events.shtml](http://www.health.state.nm.us/H1N1/immunization_events.shtml) for the current list of clinics, events, and pharmacies where the vaccine is available in your county. It is in English and Spanish.

For more information about H1N1, call New Mexico H1N1 Toll Free Hotline: 1-877-304-4161 or look up <https://www.nmhealth.org/H1N1>.

Vaccination against H1N1 flu: It's our best defense.

**Jack Callaghan, PhD, Division Director • Public Health Division**

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