

September 23, 2009



Re: PANDEMIC H1N1 INFLUENZA VACCINATION

Dear Provider,

This contains important information about H1N1 vaccination efforts in LA County that could affect your practice.

A national vaccination program against the pandemic (formerly known as swine or novel) H1N1 influenza virus will be implemented this coming fall. Information currently available from U.S. and International disease surveillance programs indicates that such a program is the best way to decrease the significant health and societal impacts that may occur during resurgence of the virus this winter.

The H1N1 vaccine will only be available through state, and in some cases, local health jurisdictions. The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health will be receiving an allocation of this vaccine based on the County's proportion of the U.S. population and will make most of the vaccine available for direct shipments to private providers who make a commitment to vaccinate their patients in the priority groups that have been recommended by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) to receive the vaccine. These priority groups are:

1. All persons 6 months through 24 years of age
2. People who live with or care for infants younger than 6 months of age
3. All pregnant women
4. Health care and emergency services personnel
5. Persons 25 years through 64 years of age with health conditions associated with high risks for medical complications from influenza.

I urge you, as a provider serving L.A Care Health Plan or its Plan Partner members (Kaiser, Anthem Blue Cross, Community Health Plan and Care 1st), to make the commitment to protect your members by registering to participate in this public health/private partnership program, especially if you serve 100 or more persons in the priority groups listed above. Please be aware that you must be able to store the vaccine at between 35-46 degrees Fahrenheit and the vaccine must never be frozen.

The vaccine and other supplies required for its administration (including safety syringes, alcohol swabs, and sharps disposal equipment) will be provided free of charge to participating providers. Additionally, participating providers will be eligible to receive a vaccine administration fee from L.A. Care Health Plan or its Plan Partners (Kaiser, Anthem Blue Cross, Community Health Plan and Care1st) dependent upon the member's eligibility. Please verify eligibility and forward the claim for the administration fee to the appropriate financial party as designated by the member's Health Plan.

A web-based registration system has been implemented by the California Department of Public Health to allow you to register and receive the H1N1 vaccine and supplies. You will be able to access the system through a link on the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (DPH) website: www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/H1N1Vaccine or by directly signing up at www.CalPanFlu.org. You can also visit the DPH Immunization Program site at www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip which contains links to a variety of H1N1 resources including situation updates, screening and treatment guidance, vaccination guidelines, respiratory hygiene materials, and a variety of patient and provider educational materials.

It is important to note that clinicians should treat patients with suspected or confirmed H1N1 as they would treat those with seasonal influenza. Most novel H1N1 flu cases in the USA have been mild and have not required antiviral treatment. Influenza screening tests may be considered if clinically appropriate. For details on screening tests and recommendations for use of anti-viral medications, please access the CDC website noted below. Contact your Participating Provider Groups for information on reimbursement for these tests. Early empiric antiviral treatment is strongly recommended for hospitalized patients with acute febrile respiratory illness including hospitalized patients with presumed community acquired pneumonia. Please follow the CDC Interim Guidance on Antiviral Recommendations for Patients with Novel Influenza A (H1N1) Virus Infection and their Close Contacts. The guidance is available at the following website: www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/recommendations.htm.

If you have questions or require additional information about the pandemic H1N1 influenza vaccination program, please contact the H1N1 customer call center at: 1-888-865-0564. You may also contact L.A. Care Health Plan at 1-866-522-2736 if you have questions regarding this communication.



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