



DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

475 Western Ave., Suite 5A
Chillicothe, OH. 45601
Phone: 740.779.1039 Fax: 740.779.0744

July 2, 2009

Dear Church Leaders:

As I'm sure you are aware we are currently experiencing an influenza pandemic. Although Ross County appears to have been spared H1N1 influenza cases so far, if this outbreak holds true to past pandemics we will experience a "second wave" this fall/winter which will be a good deal more severe.

The Ross County Health District is working to coordinate the local response and to inform and educate our partners and the public in general. There is no way to prevent an influenza pandemic, but there are ways to lessen its impact. A second wave may begin as early as September or October and could lead to school and daycare center closings, hospital overcrowding and a significant number of people sick with the flu. High absenteeism may cause challenges for some area employers.

We do not expect a vaccine for H1N1 until well after the fall flu season has begun.

Churches will not be immune from the effects of a serious and sustained influenza outbreak. Depending on the severity, your church could be ordered closed by the Ross County Board of Health. Attendance may suffer, as may certain members of your congregation. The influenza virus is spread via droplets released by coughing or sneezing. They can infect those who breath them in, or they may find entry into the body after a person has touched a surface contaminated by these droplets. Handshakes, holding hands, hugs and other close contact - which all occur in church settings on a regular basis - increase the likelihood that the virus will spread. As fall/winter and the flu season approaches, I hope you will consider ways that you can help limit the spread of the virus and still continue to hold services and serve your congregations.

I encourage you to plan for the possibility of a severe influenza outbreak, one that could last many months. In addition to ensuring the continued viability of your church, please consider ways in which you may be able to reach outside of your traditional confines and serve those who may be particularly hard-hit by an outbreak: the elderly; single mothers; those with chronic health issues; and anyone who may live alone or may not have a dependable network of family or friends.

There is preparedness-related church information on our Website: www.rosscountyhealth.com. Also, I would be happy to supply regular preparedness information for your newsletter, or encourage you to do so. We would also be happy to speak to a group or groups from your church. Please feel free to contact me by phone or by email if you have questions, or if you'd like to meet in person that can be easily arranged.

Sincerely,

Rami Yoakum
Director of Communications/Emergency Response Coordinator
Ross County Health District
740.779.1039
rlyoakum@horizonview.net

www.rosscountyhealth.com

info@rosscountyhealth.com

Equal Opportunity Employer