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Press Release

For Immediate Release

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WHEELING-OHIO COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT BEGINS PLANNING FOR FALL FLU & H1N1 SEASON

WHEELING, WV – The Wheeling-Ohio County Health Department is planning for their upcoming regular flu shot clinics and future H1N1 (Swine Flu) vaccination clinics.

Beginning in late September the health department will hold their seasonal flu shot clinics at the Wheeling-Ohio County Health Department and other locations for Ohio County residents. Clinic dates and times will be released shortly. Ohio County residents should call the health department for an appointment.

The Influenza or the Flu Season is traditionally counted from the first of November through the end of March. A yearly flu shot is recommended for the following groups of people who are at increased risk for serious complications from the flu:

- People 65 years and older;
- All children 6 months through 18 years of age.
- Women who will be pregnant during the influenza season;
- People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities that house those with long-term illnesses;
- Adults and children 6 months and older who have chronic heart or lung conditions, including asthma;
- Adults and children 6 months and older who needed regular medical care or were in a hospital during the previous year because of a metabolic disease (like diabetes), chronic kidney disease, or weakened immune system (including immune system problems caused by medicines or by infection with human immunodeficiency virus [HIV/AIDS]);
- Children between 6 months and 18 years of age who are on long-term aspirin therapy. (If given aspirin while they have the flu, they are at risk of a severe illness called Reye syndrome).

To help prevent spreading the flu to those at high risk for complications from the illness, the following people should get vaccinated:

- Anyone (including children 6 months and older) who lives with someone in a high-risk

group;

- Doctors, nurses, and other employees in hospitals and doctors' offices, including emergency response services;
- People who work in nursing homes and long-term care facilities who have contact with patients or residents;
- People who work in assisted living and other residences for people in high-risk groups; and
- Anyone who provides care to those in high-risk groups (including children under the age of 2).

The health department is also planning for future H1N1 (Swine Flu) vaccination clinics for Ohio County residents. Currently clinical trials for the H1N1 influenza vaccine are underway across the country. These trials are part of a series of steps towards the development of a safe and effective vaccine against the H1N1 strain of influenza and making it available to the public before the flu season begins in the fall.

The clinical trials are being conducted at the University of Maryland School of Medicine as well as Baylor College of Medicine, Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, Emory University, Saint Louis University, Seattle Group Health Cooperative, the University of Iowa, Vanderbilt University, Children's Mercy Hospital in Kansas City and Duke University Medical Center. Five manufacturers will be producing the vaccine for the United States, including Sanofi Pasteur, Novartis, Glaxo-Smith Kline, Medimmune and CSL.

Currently The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is developing recommendations on who should receive the novel 2009 H1N1 vaccine when it becomes available, and to determine which groups of the population should be prioritized if the vaccine is initially available in extremely limited quantities. The CDC is recommending vaccination efforts initially focus on 5 target groups: vaccination for pregnant women, people who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age, healthcare and emergency medical services personnel, persons between the ages of 6 months through 24 years, and people ages 25 through 64 years who are at higher risk for novel H1N1 because of chronic health disorders or compromised immune systems.

The health department anticipates the delivery of the H1N1 vaccine in early to mid October. The health department does not expect that there will be a shortage of novel H1N1 vaccine, but flu vaccine availability and demand can be unpredictable and there is some possibility that initially, the vaccine will be available in limited quantities.

Since the clinical trials are still underway it is not known if two doses of vaccine will be

required. This will not be known until the late summer- early fall, once clinical trials are completed. At this point the health department is planning that two doses will be needed. It is also not known what the recommended interval between the first and second dose will be. The health department is planning that individuals may need to wait 21-28 days between the first and second vaccination.

The health department does not anticipate that the H1N1 vaccination will be mandatory; rather individuals will receive recommendations on who should receive the vaccine. If the vaccine is recommended for use, those who choose vaccination for themselves or their children will be screened for contraindications to vaccination (such as an allergy to eggs) and will receive information sheets describing the vaccine's risks and benefits, possible adverse events associated with vaccination, and how to report these events.

The number of confirmed cases of H1N1 (Swine Flu) in West Virginia is currently at 333. Officials at the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources report that 294 of these cases are West Virginia residents and 39 are from out of state, but treated in West Virginia. H1N1 has been confirmed in 41 counties in West Virginia, with Wood County accounting for 84 of the cases and Kanawha County with 79 cases. The Wheeling-Ohio County Health Department is advising individuals:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you get sick with influenza, CDC recommends that you stay home from work, school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.
- If you have flu like symptoms, stay at home for at least 24 hours after you are free of a fever or signs of fever without using fever reducing medications is gone.

Wheeling-Ohio County Health Department has confirmed two positive cases of the H1N1 (swine flu) virus in Ohio County. Cases continue to be tested locally in Ohio County and throughout West Virginia and suspected cases are being forwarded to the West Virginia State Health Department for additional testing. The Health Department is monitoring these suspected cases.

For more information go to www.wvdhhr.org, to view a chart depicting the number of

H1N1 Swine Flu cases in West Virginia. This information is updated daily, Monday-Friday by 2:00pm. You can also visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website <http://www.cdc.gov/H1N1FLU> or call the Wheeling-Ohio County Health Department at (304) 234-3682 or visit our website at www.ohiocountyhealth.com.

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