

*Public Health  
Emergency Preparedness*

**Progress  
Report  
2009**

Iron County Health  
Department



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

## Introduction

Since 2001, Local Public Health Agencies have received Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) grant funding to *prepare* agencies and communities for public health emergencies. In 2009, agencies also received Public Health Emergency Response (PHER) funding to *respond* to the Novel Influenza A H1N1 Pandemic.

2009 was certainly a year in which past public health emergency preparedness initiatives were tested through real-life response. The Iron County Health Department continued the effort to meet the needs of our communities throughout this pandemic.

Local response activities generally fell into these categories:

- ◆ Disease Surveillance and Containment
- ◆ Public Information
- ◆ Vaccine Management & Distribution

This *Progress Report* reflects a snapshot of response activities carried out by the Iron County Health Department in 2009. Broadly, we learned that *flexibility* in planning and delivering services as well as *strong community partnerships* contributed to successful response efforts.

***Over 1,300 H1N1 vaccinations were given by the Iron County Health Department from October through December***

## Disease Surveillance & Containment

Early in the outbreak public health's primary activities included:

- ◆ Participating in weekly webcasts hosted by Wisconsin Department of Health Services to receive current situation reports and recommendations for response
- ◆ Monitoring and reporting the incidence of H1N1 infections in our community
- ◆ Conveying laboratory testing guidelines to clinicians
- ◆ Offering guidance on appropriate infection control measures and personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves and masks
- ◆ Issuing isolation and quarantine orders to limit spread by infected or exposed individuals
- ◆ Providing consultation on closures to schools, businesses and organizations
- ◆ Coordinating communicable disease surveillance meetings with area infection specialists to assess infection rates and employ control measures
- ◆ Maintaining a back-up supply of antiviral medications for use by hospitals and medical clinics in the event of short supply
- ◆ Entering data on cases of H1N1 infections into *Wisconsin Electronic Disease Surveillance System*

## Public Information

Public health officials have a responsibility to promptly and accurately share information with the general public so that adequate measures can be taken to protect their health. Various messages were delivered through written press releases, in-person conferences and radio broadcasts as the health crisis developed including:

- ◆ Nature of the H1N1 virus and outbreak
- ◆ Infection control messages—*Wash Hands, Cover Coughs & Sneezes, Stay Home When Sick, Get Vaccinated*—in press releases, local schools, agencies and businesses
- ◆ Symptoms of H1N1 infection, when to seek medical care and how to care for sick individuals at home
- ◆ Notification about initial lab-confirmed illnesses in our communities
- ◆ Vaccination clinics being offered and eligible target groups to be vaccinated

Additional public information and assistance activities were directed at keeping community partners informed and safe including:

- ◆ Provided first aid supplies to schools and Iron County first responders
- ◆ Provided hygiene stations to area agencies, businesses, and schools
- ◆ Meeting with elected officials and community leaders
- ◆ Holding in-person meetings with stakeholders; these updates were coordinated with Emergency Management and included medical professionals, police, fire, EMS, schools, the college, businesses and our Michigan partners
- ◆ Enhancing fax and email lists to swiftly deliver messages to specified groups

## Vaccine Management & Distribution

- ◆ Vaccine was ordered and managed according to guidelines established by federal and state health officials to meet defined target populations especially during periods of short supply. Vaccine was also redistributed to the Grand View Clinic-Hurley to reach other target groups
- ◆ Local nurses were contracted using PHER funds to assist in mass clinic operations.
- ◆ Clinics were held for health care workers and others identified as high risk
- ◆ Numerous vaccination clinics were held at a variety of locations throughout the community including schools, community centers, town halls, and the health department
- ◆ Special needs individuals were accommodated at clinics through easier access and streamlined clinics
- ◆ The health department hosted numerous appointment clinics reaching hundreds
- ◆ Data on doses administered was entered into the *Wisconsin Immunization Registry*
- ◆ Over 1,300 H1N1 vaccinations were administered collectively by the two agencies since vaccine first arrived in early October through the end of 2009

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