



May 2006

Dear School Official,

This binder of information is designed to provide you with the practical tools you and your staff will need to prepare for a pandemic flu outbreak. At the present, there is no pandemic flu in the United States.

It is important to understand that every year, a large number of people get sick with seasonal flu; 30,000 people in the United States die from seasonal flu. Flu vaccines are effective ways to prevent people from getting sick with seasonal flu.

At this time, there is also an avian/bird flu (H5 N1) virus in birds circulating in several countries. It is not in the United States now. When cases of flu in birds are identified in the United States, there may be confusion and concern. However, presence of the virus in birds doesn't necessarily mean there will be human cases. There also is no conclusive evidence that the disease spreads easily from person-to-person.

At some point, whether it is the H5N1 virus or another virus, health experts believe that there will be a new virus that spreads easily among people for which most people have no immunity and for which there is no vaccine. When that happens and people begin to get sick from the virus, we will have a pandemic flu.

There is a great deal of planning for this pandemic underway at the federal, state and local level. The tools in this binder will help your school begin those efforts. They should also help your parents begin their preparations.

As the months go by, we will be giving you additional information about:

- How your school might be used as a site for providing treatment or vaccination. At the moment, site selection is still in process. (This is sometimes called mass prophylaxis)
- What plans have been developed to care for those who are extremely ill when hospital beds in the county are full. (This is sometimes called surge capacity planning)

We hope you will work with us and help us educate the community about the importance of preparation. Please call me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Francie Wise
Communicable Disease Programs Chief

