



November 5, 2009

Dear State/Local Health Officer:

Today we have 35.6 million doses of 2009 H1N1 vaccine allocated for ordering, with more coming every day. As you know all too well, at present, demand for the vaccine in your communities still exceeds the supply we have received from manufacturers. That means it is more important than ever to focus on ensuring equitable access to the vaccine for the priority groups identified by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices: pregnant women, caretakers of infants less than 6 months of age, health care workers, children and adults with health conditions such as asthma or diabetes, and people under the age of 25. These are the people who are most vulnerable to 2009 H1N1 influenza, and it's our job to do everything we can to keep them safe this flu season.

I know you have been working hard to distribute vaccine to the people who need it most. You are on the front lines of the fight, and no one knows better than you how to reach people in your communities. I especially appreciate the many innovative ways you've found to reach them, including school-located vaccine clinics, special clinics for pregnant women, outreach to children with special needs, and making vaccine available to community- and faith-based organizations serving these high-risk populations.

The goal of the H1N1 vaccination program is to protect our population – focusing first on these high-risk groups and ensuring equitable access to the vaccine. While vaccine supplies are still limited, any vaccine distribution decisions that appear to direct vaccine to people outside the identified priority groups have the potential to undermine the credibility of the program.

It is important to make it clear to the public that we are all committed to the science-based vaccination recommendations established by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices. This may include making clear to the public as well as health care providers how the vaccine available to you is being targeted, and the basis for targeting. CDC expects all grantees to ensure that all vaccinators chosen by state and local health departments adhere to those recommendations. Toward that end, and in light of changing projections of vaccine availability, I ask each of you to review your plans immediately and work to ensure that the maximum number of doses is delivered to those at greatest risk as rapidly as possible.

I know how difficult your jobs are; we are ready and willing to help you any way we can.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas R. Frieden". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "T".

Thomas R. Frieden, M.D., M.P.H.
Director, Centers for Disease Control and
Prevention, and
Administrator, Agency for Toxic Substances
and Disease Registry