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SEDGWICK COUNTY, KANSAS
COMMUNICATIONS

NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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H1N1 and Persons of Color

(Sedgwick County, Kansas) – The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has named groups of people that are at a high risk of developing serious complications from H1N1 Influenza. In keeping with the last three subpopulation releases, which focused on pregnant women, breastfeeding moms, and those who smoke, the Sedgwick County Health Department will continue to send monthly releases focused on different subgroups.

Currently, one of the highest priority groups consists of persons with chronic health conditions. For various reasons, racial minorities tend to have more cases of these health conditions, including diabetes and heart disease. Diseases such as asthma, lung disease, diabetes and other conditions affect the immune and respiratory systems. Individuals with these conditions are therefore more likely to develop severe complications from H1N1. Latinos, Hispanics and African Americans have a higher rate of these underlying conditions and are therefore at a higher risk of life-threatening flu complications.

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One of the most common underlying health conditions that can lead to complications from the flu is asthma. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), African Americans visit the emergency department for asthma 350 percent more often than Caucasians, are hospitalized for asthma 240 percent more often than Caucasians and die from asthma 200 percent more often than Caucasians. Puerto Ricans also are disproportionately affected by asthma: Puerto Ricans have asthma 125 percent more often than Caucasians and 80 percent more often than African Americans. Puerto Ricans also have the highest rate of asthma attacks.

The best way to protect oneself from H1N1 is to receive the vaccine. The Sedgwick County Health Department is currently offering vaccine to anyone who wishes to receive it at the Health Department's H1N1 Vaccine Clinic (4095 E. Harry). So far, disproportionately low numbers of minorities have visited the H1N1 Vaccine Clinic. The Health Department encourages everyone, including minorities, who may have an underlying health condition to receive the vaccine. The vaccine is FREE of charge.

Aside from regular clinic hours, the following mobile clinics have been set up for convenient vaccine receipt:

- December 19 at Towne West Square (4600 West Kellogg) from 9 a.m. to noon
- December 19 at Towne East Square (7700 E. Kellogg) from 9 a.m. to noon
- December 21 at St. Mark's Church of God in Christ (1018 N. Dellrose St.) from 9 a.m. to noon and 3 to 6 p.m.
- December 22 at the Sedgwick County Health Department (1900 E. 9th St.) from 3 to 6 p.m.

Stay up-to-date on H1N1 information by visiting www.sedgwickcounty.org. A fact sheet about vaccines is available at this site. Call 660-5558 with H1N1 questions or e-mail flu@sedgwick.gov.

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