



*The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*  
*Executive Office of Health and Human Services*  
*Department of Public Health*  
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Commissioner

**M E M O R A N D U M**

**To:** Members of the General Court, Local and Municipal Elected Officials

**From:** John Auerbach, Commissioner of Public Health

**Cc:**

**Re:** False Rumors Regarding Mandatory Vaccination for H1N1 Influenza

**Date:** September 2, 2009

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Many of you may have heard rumors that the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is planning to impose mandatory vaccinations as part of our response to the H1N1 (swine) flu pandemic. These rumors are not true. *The Department of Public Health will not call for or authorize mandatory vaccination against the pandemic flu.* There are no public health officials on the state, national, or global level calling for forced vaccination for H1N1. These rumors appear to be part of a deliberate effort to misinform concerned citizens about state and national pandemic response efforts.

Since the outbreak of H1N1 in April, department personnel have been working tirelessly with health care providers and facilities, local public health officials, schools, municipalities, public safety authorities, and experts in the federal government and other states to ensure that we are prepared to respond to the resurgence in H1N1 cases, as cooler weather arrives and children return to school. The Department's current efforts are the culmination of years of preparation in programmatic, regulatory and statutory areas.

The Department of Public Health's H1N1 response plan is based on several key components:

- 1) **Public outreach and education** - educating public officials, health care providers, teachers, parents, and the general public about how to prevent the spread of the flu; what individuals should do if they or a loved one think they have the flu; and how health care facilities and schools should respond to the expected surge in H1N1 cases.

- 2) **Support for health care providers and local public health efforts** – ensuring that the on-the-ground responders have timely, accurate information about the spread of the disease and evolving response protocols; helping build response capacity at the local level; and getting resources like the vaccine, anti-viral medications, masks, gloves and other supplies effectively distributed around the state. To insure that our health care facilities can function adequately and safely through the fall and winter, we recently passed a regulation to require that hospitals, clinics and long term care facilities offer seasonal and H1N1 vaccines to all their employees. But any employee can decline such vaccinations. Even in health care facilities, no one is forced to be vaccinated.
- 3) **Strategic planning and statewide coordination** – tracking and monitoring the spread and virulence of H1N1 this fall to ensure that there is consistent and effective action taken across the state; and adapting public health protocols and response to a novel flu strain that may evolve over the course of the fall and winter.

The Department of Public Health has been functioning in a transparent manner and actively communicating about H1N1 planning, holding dozens of hours of conference calls with key stakeholders and engaging the media to keep the residents of Massachusetts informed. We are eager to offer the H1N1 vaccine to those most at risk who choose to be vaccinated when it becomes available in mid-October. ***Mandatory vaccination is not and has never been part of the plan or discussion in Massachusetts' pandemic response.*** For up-to-date, accurate information about H1N1 and the Commonwealth's response, go to our webpage at <http://www.mass.gov/dph/swineflu> or contact us at (617) 624-5200.