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*For Immediate Release: May 11, 2009*

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### **Preventing the Spread of Swine Flu: Advice for EVERYBODY**

**New York, NY** - Individuals with and without disabilities reacted with concern to last week's health alerts. The elderly, the young, the ill and the strong all experienced a certain degree of apprehension when the World Health Organization raised the H1N1 Influenza alert to Phase 5. This indicates that a pandemic is imminent. The World Health Organization is reporting close to five thousand confirmed cases of H1N1 (also known as Swine Flu) and 53 deaths across 30 countries. The US Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is reporting 2,532 cases and 3 deaths in 44 US states.

In his weekly address, President Obama said, "this is a new strain of the flu virus, and because we haven't developed an immunity to it, it has more potential to cause us harm." The president recapped his administration's efforts, which include asking schools with confirmed cases of the flu virus to close for up to 14 days; urging employers to let infected workers take all the sick days they need; and reminding Americans to wash their hands often, cover their coughs and stay home if ill. Obama has requested that Congress provide \$1.5 billion to buy more medicine and equipment if needed.

The US Centers for Disease Control & Prevention suggest the following 6 steps to keep yourself and your family safe from swine flu:

- 1. Avoid close contact**, especially with people who are sick. If you are sick, be sure to keep your distance from others in order to protect them from getting sick too.
- 2. Stay home when you are sick.** If at all possible, stay home from work, school and other public places when you are sick. Although you might be hesitant to take a few days off, it is absolutely necessary to prevent the spread of illness.
- 3. Cover your mouth and nose when you cough and sneeze.** Use a tissue, not your hands! Throw the tissue in the trash after using it.

- 4. Clean your hands often** to protect yourself from germs – especially after you cough or sneeze. If you know you won't be able to access a sink with soap for a while, bring along some alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- 5. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.** Not only does this protect you from outside germs, but it will also prevent you from spreading your own germs to those around you.
- 6. Practice other good health habits** that will keep your immune system in good shape. This means getting plenty of sleep, being physically active, managing stress, drinking plenty of fluids, and eating nutritious food.

These six steps should be practiced all the time, not only when you are sick! Healthy adults can infect others with flu one day before they get symptoms themselves – so you can be spreading illness without knowing you have it.

#### **Additional Preparedness Tips for People with Disabilities**

It is imperative to consider the needs of people with disabilities during a pandemic. Individual preparedness can be the key to keeping EVERYONE safe during an emergency. In planning for a pandemic, it is wise for someone with disabilities to consider preparing for all potential emergency situations, for instance:

**Establish a personal support network.** Such a support network can be made of trusted people who will offer assistance if needed. The network should include a minimum of three people for each location where a person with disabilities spends a lot of time (home, school or work.) If you are aware of someone who has special needs, offer to be a part of their network.

**Create a personal assessment.** Make a list of personal needs and resources for meeting them in a disaster environment. For preparedness purposes, it's best to base your plan on your lowest expected level of functioning during the crisis.

**Arm yourself with knowledge.** A thorough understanding of possible emergency situations will aid to lessen your fear and build your confidence in order to most effectively face a pandemic situation.

- Bridge Multimedia offers a free digital directory called Emergency Preparedness Online at <http://www.emergencypreonline.org>, with a special emphasis on those with individual needs.
- The U.S. government posts a website regarding H1N1, pandemics, and informative resources at [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov).
- The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) also has a website with highly useful information about flu prevention at <http://www.cdc.gov>  
These websites are fully 508-compliant.

- CDC has also posted on YouTube an informative 5-minute flu prevention video with captions:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g5t1r7yG7rM&feature=featured>
- The Described and Captioned Media Program (DCMP) administered by the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) and funded by the U.S. Department of Education, has a collection of videos about virus and disease prevention. Programs can be viewed with captioning, description, or both, with one title captioned in Spanish. Videos are available to registered DCMP members.  
[www.dcmp.org](http://www.dcmp.org)
- Individuals who are deaf can access flu information in ASL at  
<http://www.deafmd.org/pub/Swine-Flu-Influenza-A-H1N1/Public-Service-Announcement>

**Finally, remember to stay aware of the symptoms of the swine flu.** They include high fever, headache, extreme tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, and muscle aches. Among children, it is also common to experience diarrhea and vomiting. If you feel that you are experiencing some or all of these symptoms, **see your doctor immediately.**

**For more information on pandemic flu, and emergencies of all kinds, visit Emergency Preparedness Online:**

*Emergency Preparedness Online* is a website and printer-friendly resource directory established to provide information regarding organizations involved in emergency preparedness and communications, particularly as they relate to individuals with disabilities. The directory includes information about and reports from government agencies and commissions, private and not-for-profit organizations, and foreign and international groups pertaining to their work involving response, recovery, and communications during times of emergency, with an additional focus on the accessibility of such communications for people with disabilities.

<http://www.emergencypreonline.org>

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