



## STATE OF OHIO

Emergency Operations Center

### NEWS RELEASE

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## **ODH BEGINS NEXT PHASE OF VACCINE DISTRIBUTION STRATEGY**

*High-risk individuals encouraged to seek vaccine*

COLUMBUS – As part of the next phase of the Ohio Department of Health's (ODH) strategy to provide vaccine to Ohioans, ODH today told its partners that after a final week of focused efforts to reach high risk populations, it will expand H1N1 influenza vaccine eligibility to all Ohioans beginning December 14.

For the next week, health officials will continue to focus vaccination efforts exclusively on health care and EMS workers who provide direct patient care; pregnant women; people who live with or care for children less than 6 months of age; all people 6 months to 24 years; and people 25 to 64 years with chronic medical conditions. Beginning the week of December 14, these individuals will continue to be eligible for vaccination, along with other Ohioans who are not in the risk groups.

“We continue to urge high-risk Ohioans to seek H1N1 and seasonal flu vaccines,” ODH Director Alvin D. Jackson, M.D. said.

Nearly 2.3 million doses of the vaccine are already available in the State of Ohio and more is expected to arrive each week. Health officials evaluated several factors before making the decision to lift restrictions on vaccine eligibility, including prior vaccine distribution, feedback from local health departments and discussions with other state and federal health officials.

ODH and their local partners have used various strategies to reach the at-risk populations including school-based, appointment-only and mass clinics and distribution to private providers to reach at-risk Ohioans.

Local partners will have flexibility to determine if it is necessary to continue prioritizing the vaccine for the at-risk populations, based on the needs in their local area.

In addition to being vaccinated, Ohioans can help stop the spread of illness by washing hands thoroughly and often; covering mouths when sneezing or coughing; and staying home from work or school if sick.

For more information on vaccine availability, check the ODH Web site at <http://www.flu.ohio.gov> or call the ODH H1N1 information line at 1-866-800-1404 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. You can also follow ODH on Facebook and Twitter by going to the Web site.

**Contact: State of Ohio Joint Information Center – (614) 799-6480**