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West Virginia Students Are Receiving H1N1 Letter and Fact Sheet This Week

State health officials today announced a partnership with the West Virginia Department of Education to send H1N1 information home to all parents of school age children including a personal letter from the State Health Officer regarding H1N1 in West Virginia.

State Health Officer Dr. Cathy Slemp, who is leading the state's fight against H1N1, has written a personal letter to parents of school age children sharing the latest guidance on H1N1. The letter will be accompanied by a H1N1 fact sheet for parents answering frequently asked questions about H1N1 (swine) flu and the vaccine.

Dr. Slemp said, "Like every other parent, it was important to me to know the facts about H1N1 and the H1N1 vaccine before making a decision about vaccinating my children. My husband and I know how serious flu can be. We looked at the benefits and the safety of the vaccine. For us, the decision to vaccinate was clear." Slemp added, "Parents have told us, just give me the facts, so I can choose what's right for my family. This letter and fact sheet are two tools I hope parents find useful in determining whether or not to vaccinate their children."

Both the H1N1 Fact Sheet and Dr. Slemp's letter are being sent home with children from school this week. Governor Joe Manchin III said earlier this week during a press conference that if parents do not receive the fact sheet, they should contact their school and request one.

School age children are one of the largest target groups for H1N1 vaccine. The groups include all persons age 6 months to 24 years of age, healthcare workers, pregnant women, individuals that care directly for children less than 6 months of age and individuals age 25-64 with underlying health conditions. All segments of the target population are equally important for vaccination efforts. None are prioritized over another but having enough vaccine to cover all will take time. Vaccine supplies are expected to increase in November and expand further in December and January.

More information is available at www.wvflu.org.