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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The staff at the Sarpy /Cass Department of Health has been working closely with the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to monitor the H1N1 influenza situation and to release the best possible guidelines for area residents. Weekly conference calls with the state and other local health departments have resulted in the best possible communication from border to border in Nebraska to ensure that health officials are speaking with "one voice" in handling the possible pandemic threat that the novel H1N1 virus poses. On the national level, staff at the Sarpy/Cass Department of Health also participate in weekly conference calls from the CDC.

There have been meetings with local school administrators to discuss health precautions to be taken in their schools and the health department has also furnished the schools with important H1N1 information to pass on to parents. A limited quantity of masks has also been delivered to all schools in Sarpy and Cass counties. Information has also been sent to local healthcare providers as it is received from state and CDC health officials; updates and new guidelines have frequently been necessary. Posters and brochures are being produced and will be dispersed throughout our communities soon. The health department website, sarpycasshealthdepartment.org is constantly being updated and we encourage everyone to check that frequently as well as the CDC website, flu.gov.

There have been some cases of H1N1 in our area over the summer months and currently, as well. The cases have been relatively mild and we have no undue concern at this time; most of those who have been sick have recovered without needing treatment. The symptoms of novel H1N1 flu virus include fever over 100 degrees, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, and fatigue. We urge those with these symptoms to stay home from work and/or school and do not return until fever has been absent for 24 hours, without taking a fever reducing medication.

Precautions to take to avoid getting the flu or transmitting it to others:

- Wash hands frequently or use an alcohol-based sanitizer
- Avoid close contact with people who are coughing or otherwise appear ill.
- Avoid touching your eyes, mouth, and nose
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze; dispose of this tissue immediately. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands.

It is expected that H1N1 vaccine will be available in mid-October; the health department will issue more information regarding vaccination sites in the near future. In the meantime, it is important , as always, to be protected against seasonal flu and that vaccine is currently available.

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