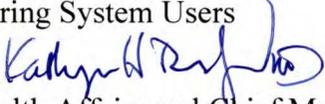




Homeland
Security

August 20, 2013

MEMORANDUM FOR: Lessons Learned Information Sharing System Users

FROM: Kathryn H. Brinsfield, MD, MPH 
Acting Assistant Secretary for Health Affairs and Chief Medical
Officer

SUBJECT: Release of DHS H1N1 AAR Executive Summary

As the designated DHS lead for pandemic preparedness and response efforts, the Office of Health Affairs (OHA) has been working with our United States Government partners to improve the Nation's capacity for pandemic planning, prevention, and mitigation efforts at the Federal, state, and local level. As part of this effort, OHA is releasing an executive summary of the DHS H1N1 After Action Report (AAR) to share relevant findings with state, local, territorial, and tribal stakeholders to aid their planning efforts for future pandemics, through the national network of fusion centers and the Lessons Learned Information Sharing (LLIS) portal (www.LLIS.gov).

DHS's engagement in pandemic preparedness activities is built upon the National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza (November 2005) and we coordinate extensively with other federal Departments and Agencies on pandemic preparedness and response issues. The intent of the 2009 H1N1 AAR was to conduct an internal analysis of DHS's actions and effectiveness in preparing for and responding to the 2009 H1N1 pandemic threat. DHS followed planning guidance in the *DHS 2009-H1N1 Implementation Plan (I-PLAN)*, designed to ensure critical mission readiness and protection of DHS personnel and people in the care and custody of DHS from the adverse effects of the H1N1 virus.

The ability of DHS to effectively coordinate response actions is segmented by four pillars (Surveillance, Vaccination, Mitigation, and Communications and Education) identified in the *National Framework for 2009-H1N1 Influenza Preparedness and Response*, as well as a fifth area of Governance. Through an examination of those five pillars, DHS identified nine key corrective actions that DHS has since taken to improve its capabilities to mitigate and respond to a pandemic threat. Of particular relevance to our stakeholders, DHS took corrective actions in the following areas:

1. Surveillance

Prior to and during the 2009 H1N1 pandemic many biosurveillance products, including models and products, were developed and distributed by a variety of sources. DHS

stakeholders expressed a desire to have better information as to the availability, utility, and accuracy of similar products and information. DHS reviewed and incorporated changes in the process whereby updated accurate biosurveillance, medical information, and intelligence products and processes are shared with stakeholders.

2. Communications and Education

DHS recognized a need to review and finalize its Employee Incident Communication Plan, including review by and clearance with Departmental leadership through the Executive Secretariat so that current, accurate situational information can be distributed to employees in a timely manner. Specifically, DHS developed a coordinated system for distributing messages that includes methods to reach front-line employees without access to e-mail.

3. Mitigation Measures

DHS needed a defined process whereby messages to employees from the Secretary or Deputy Secretary are developed, modified, and coordinated among subject matter experts prior to their submission for clearance and signature. An SOP was developed to detail resources available for DHS Components participating in message development to facilitate collaboration on message development and to ensure the appropriate experts were consulted.

The nature of the H1N1 threat affected a broad range of homeland security operations and required DHS to sustain critical infrastructure, mitigate the impact of the pandemic on the economy and the functioning of society, and maintain all mission essential functions while protecting the DHS workforce and those held in DHS custody. Although no recent outbreak, such as H7N9, has developed into a worldwide pandemic, DHS has proactively initiated review of internal and external programs to ensure that DHS can continue to protect the homeland in the event of a pandemic outbreak. As appropriate materials are finalized and/or updated, DHS will continue to share the relevant documents with our state, local, territorial, and tribal stakeholders.

We encourage you to post your pandemic influenza lessons learned, best practices, after-action reports and other reports and documents on LLIS so that others can incorporate these materials into their training, planning, and operations for future pandemics. Information about current influenza viruses can be found through the Department of Health and Human Services' website, www.flu.gov.