

Pandemic Flu Community Meeting

Henderson County to Host Public Engagement Meeting on Pandemic Flu November 17

November 1, 2007 – Henderson County, NC: Henderson County has been selected as one of five sites in the country to host a public engagement meeting November 17 on the goals the federal government has set concerning prioritizing the distribution of a Pandemic Influenza Vaccine should a pandemic occur in the U.S.

Henderson County public health officials are seeking 100 participants who are representative of all demographics in the county to participate in this interactive public engagement meeting from **8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, November 17, at Trinity Presbyterian Church, 900 Blythe Street, Hendersonville.** Pre-registration is required and registration is limited. Breakfast and lunch will be provided and participants could be compensated with a small stipend for their time. For more information or to register, go to www.hendersoncountync.org/health or register by phone at 1-800-219-6670.

“Pandemic influenza occurs when there is a major change in the flu virus that is much more infectious than seasonal flu,” said Tom Bridges, Henderson County’s Public Health Director. The 1918 flu pandemic is one example, where 675,000 died. “We don’t know when another pandemic may occur but the government wants to have a plan in place to prioritize vaccine distribution should one occur and it’s asked our help to gather public input on this plan.”

Linda Weldon, Henderson County Communicable Disease Nurse Supervisor said, “Everyone may be susceptible to pandemic flu—it spreads much quicker, sickens more people, and is a much more serious illness than seasonal flu. And because pandemic flu won’t respond to seasonal flu vaccines, a new vaccine will have to be developed to protect people. When that vaccine becomes available, the amount that is made each month will be limited. Therefore, a priority list is needed to determine who gets vaccines earlier and who gets vaccines later.”

The federal government has asked five communities in the United States to hold public engagement meetings to gather public input on this prioritization process. Henderson County joins Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Nassau County,

New York; Washington D.C. and Las Cruces, New Mexico in hosting public engagement meetings.

"It's really important to get the public involved in this discussion, although it's hard to get people to discuss such a stark problem before a crisis actually happens," Bridges said. "It's important the public is engaged in the conversation and helps make and understand priorities for vaccination should a pandemic occur."

For more information or to register go to
www.hendersoncountync.org/health

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This Pandemic Influenza Vaccine Prioritization Public Engagement Meeting is sponsored by the Center for Disease Control, the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, the National Association of County & City Health Officials, and the Henderson County Department of Public Health.