

# Health Law Bulletin

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## ARE YOU PREPARED FOR AN INFLUENZA PANDEMIC?

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The World Health Organization has declared a global H1N1 flu pandemic this year. According to U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius, “What this declaration does do is remind the world that flu viruses like H1N1 need to be taken seriously. Although we have not seen large numbers of severe cases in this country so far, things could possibly be very different in the fall, especially if things change in the Southern Hemisphere, and we need to start preparing now in order to be ready for a possible H1N1 immunization campaign starting in late September.”

Health care providers will be impacted by the flu pandemic as providers as well as employers. The Centers for Disease Control has developed a checklist to help clinics and other ambulatory medical centers to assess and improve their preparedness for responding to pandemic influenza. The entire checklist can be found on the Internet at <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/pdf/medofficesclinics.pdf>.

Highlights of the checklist include:

- Organizing a committee with the responsibility of specifically addressing pandemic influenza preparedness. One individual should be designated as the pandemic preparedness coordinator.
- A person is identified for questions/consultation on infection control measures to prevent transmission of pandemic influenza.
- A written plan is developed that addresses surveillance and detection, communication, education and training for personnel, informational materials for patients, a triage plan, an infection control plan, a plan for respiratory hygiene/cough etiquette, a vaccine and antiviral use plan, an occupational health plan, and a plan to address surge capacity.

The CDC has provided checklists for other provider types which are available at <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/healthcare/index.html>.

With September just two months away, it is time to make sure that your offices have a pandemic response plan in place and that it is communicated to all of your employees.