

Press Release

State of Maryland
Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services



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DPSCS Correctional Facilities Receive First Doses of H1N1 Vaccine

Dissemination will be consistent with CDC guidelines for priority populations

TOWSON, MD (November 12, 2009) ---The Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) has received its first shipment of H1N1 Vaccine. Based on pre-determined priority groups, 1,900 shots will be administered by our contracted health care provider, Correctional Medical Services.

DPSCS has a constitutional obligation to provide healthcare that meets community standards of care to inmate and detainee populations under our supervision; this includes administering seasonal and H1N1 flu vaccines. Every year, DPSCS pays for and makes the seasonal flu vaccine available to high risk members of its incarcerated population. Cost is not a factor when providing the H1N1 vaccine since the federal government is providing it free of charge.

Individuals have been identified in priority groups, both inmates and then staff that choose the option, to receive the vaccine through DPSCS as it becomes available. Priority groups for offender populations were identified by DPSCS based on similar standards to those in the community identified by the Center for Disease Control (CDC). They include those who are pregnant, those under the age of 24 with underlying health conditions, and those ages 25-64 with high risk health complications.

In addition, approximately 600 of those vaccines will be offered to custody staff who are either permanently assigned to infirmaries or a medical transportation unit, including our contracted healthcare providers working within the facilities. All other staff will be advised to seek the vaccine from their regular physician or local health department.

DPSCS petitioned to have our correctional officers considered for the priority group of "first responders and emergency personnel," but based on CDC guidelines, and the limited number of H1N1 vaccines, they were not given that status.

DPSCS does not provide medical services (including seasonal flu shots) to its employees; staff are advised to work with their personal physicians or local health departments, and have been strongly urged to get seasonal flu vaccine as well as H1N1 vaccine when it is available to them.

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The Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services protects the public, its employees and the detainees and offenders under its supervision.