



STATE OF OHIO

Emergency Operations Center

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ODH, Community Leaders Discuss H1N1 Vaccine Outreach to African-American and Hispanic Communities *Conference Calls Provide Information, Dispel Rumors*

COLUMBUS – Ohio Department of Health (ODH) officials held two conference calls on Monday with leaders of the African-American and Hispanic communities. The purpose of the calls was to educate them further about the H1N1 flu virus and to ask for their assistance in spreading the message about the importance of getting vaccinated.

“Reports from around Ohio and across the nation show that compared to other groups, fewer African-Americans and Hispanics are seeking the vaccine,” said ODH Director Alvin D. Jackson, M.D. “We want to make sure that they are getting the facts about the H1N1 virus and the impact it can have on their health and their communities.”

Community leaders who took part in Monday’s calls include a state representative, city and community leaders, and leadership within the state’s religious community.

Dr. Jackson and members of his staff briefed participants in the call regarding the current status of the pandemic. They also provided data about the burden of the disease on minority communities; discussed why certain minority groups are considered high risk for H1N1; provided information on how the vaccine is produced; and, dispelled certain myths and misconceptions about the H1N1 vaccine.

Mary Santiago, Chair of the Ohio Commission of Hispanic/Latino Affairs, believes that a certain amount of fear, along with language barriers, transportation issues, clinic locations and other factors combine to play a role in the Hispanic turnout.

"We must continue to widen the communication channels, by working through Latino social service agencies, grassroots organizations and trusted community leaders to reach this population. Our Commission is here to connect these groups with the Health Department throughout the state through our Latino Community Networks" Santiago said.

For more information, check the ODH Web site at <http://www.flu.ohio.gov> or call the ODH H1N1 information line at 1-866-800-1404 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

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