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Central Region Health Directors Encouraging Parents to fill out H1N1 Vaccination Permission Forms

In an effort to protect the health of Central Virginia's children, the area's eight health district directors are encouraging all parents of school-age children to take advantage of the free novel H1N1 vaccination programs being offered in cooperation with K-12 schools throughout the region. The first step to doing so is to complete the novel H1N1 influenza vaccination form being sent home with students. While the vaccination is not mandatory, health officials are advising that everyone consider getting the vaccine.

"The most recent vaccine shipment received will allow us to protect the health of our children and young adults who are among the groups most at risk", said Crater Health District Director, Kay Rankin, M.D., MPH. "They are the ones who tend to be in close contact at school and the workplace," Dr. Rankin added. The CDC recommends those between the ages of 6 months and 24 years old be vaccinated as soon as vaccine becomes available. Other groups at risk are pregnant women, children's care givers, healthcare and emergency personnel.

Local health departments and schools are sending out a two page permission form that will require a signature on the front and back of the form. "Filling out the vaccination permission form is the first step for our residents to protect their families and their community," said Richmond Health District Director, Donald Stern, M.D., MPH. Dr. Stern urges parents to complete a form for each student and return them to the school quickly to take advantage of the opportunity for free H1N1 vaccination.

Local health departments are partnering with schools to offer vaccination clinics in the coming days. "Our goal is not only to protect the health of our children but to accommodate our parents' busy schedules by offering clinics at their child's school," said Thomas Jefferson Health District Director, Lilian Peake, M.D., MPH. "We want to make the process as convenient as possible," Dr. Peake added.

For those children unable to participate in school-based clinics, novel H1N1 vaccine will also be available through local health departments, private physician offices, and other vaccinators. While free through the health department, a small administration fee may be charged by other vaccinators.

The Central Region's eight health districts are Chesterfield, Chickahominy (located in Hanover), Crater (located in Petersburg), Henrico, Thomas Jefferson (located in Charlottesville), Piedmont (located in Farmville), Richmond and Southside (located in Boydton).

For more information on the vaccine or the school vaccination clinics, call your local health department or log onto www.vdh.virginia.gov and click on novel H1N1 information.