



H1N1 Impact on Minorities and DSHS Mitigation Efforts

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As data continues to be collected and investigated about the 2009-2010 Flu Season, it appears that minorities were disproportionately affected by the 2009 Novel H1N1 Influenza Virus. In an article published in the Houston Chronicle it mentioned Hispanics accounted for more than half of the 95 swine flu-related deaths in Texas in the first six months of the H1N1 pandemic—an analysis by the state health department. Hispanics predominate in the state’s southernmost counties, where 28 percent of the H1N1 deaths happened through late October. Several physical conditions that are more common among Hispanics have been identified by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as risk factors for H1N1 becoming fatal. They include pregnancy, diabetes and possibly obesity. Residents in Rio Grande Valley counties are more likely to lack medical insurance and have less access to health care than the average Texan. “Viruses don’t care whether you’re black or white or whether you’re Hispanic or not,” said Lovell A. Jones, a health disparities researcher who directs the Center for Research on Minority Health at Houston’s M.D. Anderson Cancer Center. Latinos, who represent 37 percent of the state’s population, comprised 52 percent of H1N1 deaths — even with 17 percent of victims having an unknown race or ethnicity — so their actual share may be even higher. Hispanics also accounted for nearly two-thirds of intensive care unit admissions for swine flu. Across the nation comparable data is being reported in Los Angeles, Chicago, Milwaukee, Boston, Atlanta, Denver, Seattle, etc

So what were some of the State mitigating? Throughout the 2009-2010 school year, Emergency Response Team (ERT) collaborated with the Office of Border Health (OBH) to coordinate a regional school-based influenza-like illness (ILI) surveillance project. Each week throughout the school year, school nurses enrolled in this project reported the frequency of students presenting with ILI symptoms. This data was used to monitor the level of influenza activity throughout the region, and was sometimes paired with data from other reporting sources to evaluate reported disease outbreaks within HSR 9/10. Overall, the project nicely accentuated other efforts to respond to H1N1 and ILI throughout our 36 counties. In two separate journeys during the first week of May, ERT and OBH employees visited several of the participating schools throughout HSR 9/10 to deliver infection control activities. These treks included schools in Presidio, Van Horn, Pecos, Fort Stockton, Iraan, and Ozona. OBH employees presented in Presidio, Van Horn, and Pecos while ERT employees presented in Fort Stockton, Iraan, and Ozona. ERT’s presentations targeted elementary and middle school-aged children. Overall, the ERT portion of the activity reached approximately 400 children throughout HSR 9/10. The presentations included information about infection control and prevention as well as a demonstration with black light gel. The demonstrations highlighted the proper way to wash one’s hands and the ease

with which germs can spread if proper hand washing is not practiced. Both the presentations and the demonstrations were a hit. Students were enthusiastic and eager to participate. Teachers were receptive to the presentations as well. Ultimately, this outreach proved to be a valuable experience for both presenters and audience.

On 12 Apr 2010 the DSHS Regional Staff conducted the Novel H1N1 Pandemic Influenza hot wash. They were guided by The Litaker Group—the agency contracted by DSHS Central Office to manage these events across the State for the regional staff and stakeholders. Approximately twenty DSHS staff members were invited to the hot wash to discuss the event from various perspectives. The purpose of this hot wash was to describe the interesting challenges our Region faced while highlighting the best practices. Some of the successes included: the amazing efforts of the nursing & vaccination staff in coordinating and administering thousands of seasonal and H1N1 flu vaccinations; site visits to communities; the HSR Training Orientation Manual developed for the contract nursing staff; the effectiveness of our virtual-ROC; the relationships that were strengthened with the Mexican Public Health officials, the Promotoras, the Tiguas and the ports-of entry. A similar hot wash was conducted for key stakeholders in El Paso (27 Apr) and Midland (29 Apr).

Texas 2009-2010

| Deaths | |
|---------------|------------|
| April* | 1 |
| May | 5 |
| June | 17 |
| July | 9 |
| August | 11 |
| September | 30 |
| October | 81 |
| November | 38 |
| December | 18 |
| January | 5 |
| February | 11 |
| March | 11 |
| April | 3 |
| Total: | 240 |

*Mexico City resident who died in Texas
This is the final report for 2009-2010 flu season.

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