

Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Health Department Holds a Mock Immunization Clinic Exercise

Coldwater, MI. The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency will hold a mock flu immunization exercise on Wednesday, May 25th, to test the tri-county health department's ability to distribute vaccines during a pandemic flu outbreak. The exercise is part of the requirements the health department must complete to comply with federal emergency preparedness response requirements.

"A large-scale health emergency -- such as a disease outbreak like pandemic flu - would quickly overwhelm local resources, making it necessary for local health authorities to resort to mobile clinics," said Jim Cook, Emergency Preparedness Coordinator for the tri-county health department. "In a pandemic flu outbreak, we may need to provide vaccinations to all our residents, more than 150,000 people. By practicing through these mock exercises, we learn how to best stage clinics, how to coordinate staffing and resources with other health and emergency medical providers and how to quickly and efficiently vaccinate mass groups. By doing these exercises on-site, we can better detect obstacles so than in the event of a pandemic outbreak, we are better prepared and in turn, so are you," said Cook. The mock exercise is a grant funded activity. Funds used are provided by the Centers for Disease Control and with oversight from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services.

As part of the drill, Bronson Junior and Senior High students, teachers and administrators will assist with the exercise, serving as volunteers. The goal of the exercise is to determine how many people the health department's mock clinic could serve in a two hour period. Volunteers will complete forms, play act out different scenarios and be 'poked' by coffee stirrers. No vaccinations will be given.

"Preparing now for the worst is vital to our response and recovery efforts during an actual emergency. This drill allows us to practice working together so we can do our best during the real thing," Rebecca Burns, Health Officer added. "Preparedness is essential to our success in the event of a pandemic and the best preparation we can offer is to do our best today."

A pandemic is defined as a global disease outbreak. It is determined by how the disease spreads, not how many deaths it causes. Pandemics may occur when new viruses enter the human population and people have little to no immunity against it. The virus spreads quickly from person-to-person worldwide.

The United States is not currently experiencing a flu pandemic. If a pandemic occurs, the federal government will work to identify the cause and create a vaccine.

To learn more about how you can be prepared in the event of a pandemic outbreak or a natural disaster, visit our website at www.bhsj.org and click on the Emergency Preparedness button on the left sidebar.

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