

XXI. Talking Points – How to Get Your Peers Involved

Is the threat of a flu pandemic real?

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other leading public health experts say the threat of a pandemic is real.
- It is not a question of IF a flu pandemic will occur, but of WHEN it will occur.
- Experts are concerned that the H5N1 virus (bird flu) is changing and could evolve into a pandemic flu virus.

What is a flu pandemic?

- A flu (influenza) pandemic is an outbreak of a new flu virus that spreads around the world.
- The virus could spread easily from person to person, mostly through coughing and sneezing.
- Because the virus is new to people, everyone will be at risk of getting it.
- There were three flu pandemics in the 20th century.
- The 1918–1919 flu pandemic caused the deaths of at least 675,000 Americans and 50 million people worldwide.
- If a pandemic of similar severity occurred today, 90 million people could become ill and nearly 2 million Americans could die.

What does preparation mean?

- The Government is working to prepare the Nation for a pandemic.
- Communities and individuals also need to prepare.
- Personal preparedness is as easy as taking these simple steps:
 - Stocking up on necessities to make an extended stay at home easier
 - Improving hand washing and cough and sneeze etiquette to limit the spread of germs
 - Planning ahead in case schools are dismissed, you can't get to work, or you or a sick family member requires care.
- If people don't prepare now, a pandemic could produce these consequences:
 - Affect as much as 40% of the population
 - Result in failed businesses, lost jobs, and increased sickness and fatalities
 - Threaten the world economy.

What can you do as a community leader to help?

- Government alone can't prepare the Nation for a pandemic.
- This challenge requires leadership from those most respected and trusted in the community.
- As a community leader, you can
 - Share information on pandemic flu and preparedness with your group and
 - Encourage your group to get prepared.
- While no one can prevent a pandemic from happening, working together to prepare the Nation will help minimize its impact.

What is the “Take the Lead” initiative and how do I join?

- Government leaders and national and state-level organizations support your leadership in helping your group and their families prepare for a pandemic.
- You don't need to be an expert on pandemic flu. You will be provided with resources that can be used to inform your group about pandemic flu.
- You will be given easy-to-use tools to encourage your group to prepare.
- You will be linked to other national and local preparedness efforts to learn from and share information.
- **Learn more, talk to me, or visit www.takethelead.pandemicflu.gov for more information.**