

CNO Insights Special Edition: Seasonal Influenza/H1N1 Pandemic Update



IS YOUR STAFFING PLAN PREPARED FOR A FLU PANDEMIC?

While there has been much press in recent weeks that the H1N1 pandemic is in decline and not as severe as initial projections had forecast, it remains a viable force to be reckoned with according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Overall, flu activity in the United States remains very high. Consider these most recent facts from the CDC Key Flu Indicators - 11/13/09:

- While influenza-like illness (ILI) declined overall nationally, visits to doctors for influenza-like illness remain higher than what is seen during the peak of many regular flu seasons.
- Total influenza hospitalization rates for laboratory-confirmed flu continue to climb and remain higher than expected for this time of year. Hospitalization rates continue to be highest in younger populations with the highest hospitalization rate reported in children 0-4 years old.
- The proportion of deaths attributed to pneumonia and influenza (P&I) based on the 122 Cities Report continues to increase and has been higher than what is expected for six weeks now.
- 46 states are reporting widespread influenza activity at this time.

Healthcare facilities are being strongly encouraged to have a comprehensive surge staffing response plan ready should a full-blown pandemic occur. If transmission rates double from the spring outbreak of H1N1, Emergency Departments could see 150% of normal volume. Medical resources — particularly trained staff — will likely be scarce.

All persons involved with the implementation of a surge staffing plan must be in agreement in order to ensure few disruptions in service during the start of an epidemic. This type of preparedness is important not only for your organization but for the organizations and companies you plan on working with throughout the event. At Cross Country Staffing, our Emergency Preparedness Plan for Pandemics is based on guidelines created by the CDC, OSHA, ANA, The Joint Commission, and the internal Cross Country Healthcare Disaster Plan and Communicable Disease Policy.

As a Joint Commission Certified Staffing Services company, we already maintain standards for pre-employment and preventive health screening, vaccination administration, background checks, licensure, qualifications for employment and competency. This allows us to have a steady pool of qualified travel healthcare professionals ready to deploy should a natural disaster or pandemic occur.

One of the top efforts the CDC and the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response stress in their report on State and Local Pandemic Influenza Preparedness is the importance of recruiting trained and registered medical personnel for use in a pandemic. Cross Country Staffing

has maintained structures and processes that validate our ability to provide surge supply while at the same time ensuring that we adhere to the Joint Commission staffing services standards. These include structural, process and outcomes activities such as:

- Assignment fulfillment monitoring by on-site account manager
- Credentialing standards
- Collaborative on-boarding of healthcare professionals
- Behavioral interviewing of candidates by RN Account Managers
- Position placement directed by RN Account Managers
- Monthly reports to the Joint Commission on healthcare staffing services quality performance measures
- 'Just in Time' clinical performance issues review by RN clinical staff
- Satisfaction surveys

During a declared pandemic, we fully expect that our healthcare professionals will complete the assignment as per their contract. To support this, our pandemic communication plan includes notices to all of our travelers in the given area about how to contact us during the pandemic and what procedures to follow if they have any questions about completing shifts, floating, completing the assignment, payroll or the facility emergency plan.

To get an accurate idea of our range and capability for surge supply it is essential to understand that we have a vast database of over 400,000 nursing and allied healthcare professionals. Our proprietary staffing services transaction system allows established healthcare facility clients to identify "assignment start" ready surge supply. We have specific supply demographics to draw upon to develop the immediate surge supply plan such as:

- # Healthcare professionals on assignment at a given facility and any location across U.S.
- # Healthcare professionals by education level
- # Healthcare professionals by specialty
- # Healthcare professionals with active license by NY state and any state
- # Healthcare professionals with flu vaccination completed
- # of active per diem staff available in the local area

Each year, flu season can stress a hospital's ability to maintain normal operations because of the increase in both outpatient volume and admissions. With the predictions of H1N1 making a strong second wave, it is prudent to prepare for a worst-case scenario in regards to the flu season.

For more information call 800-873-9182 or visit us at www.crosscountrystaffing.com

