



CDC's Community Guidelines for Pandemic Preparedness Are Just a Beginning, Implementation Strategies Are Essential, Says Trust for America's Health

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Washington, D. C., February 1, 2007 – The following is a statement by Jeff Levi, PhD, Executive Director of Trust for America's Health (TFAH):

“CDC's release today of guidelines for public health measures to respond to pandemic flu should be the start of an important national conversation about how to better prepare the country for a possible outbreak.

These guidelines should be seen as just one part of a larger strategy that must include more rapid production of vaccines and anti-virals. But if a pandemic were to strike in the immediate future, before a vaccine would be widely available, we would need to consider measures such as those contained in these guidelines. Issues such as whether or not to close schools, limit travel, and ask people to quarantine themselves are very complex and have huge ripple effects for people's lives and our economy.

The appropriateness of these interventions will vary from community to community and will also depend on the severity of the pandemic. The federal government's recommendations regarding prioritization of scarce vaccine supply started a community-level dialogue and decision making process; these guidelines should be the start of a similar conversation in communities around the nation about what will work best.

The guidelines raise difficult practical and policy issues. For instance, if a sick individual is expected to stay home and a household member is expected to remain home to care for them, we must consider implications regarding sick leave and paid family leave that would encourage people to comply with such guidance. We also need to think about how vital medical and food supplies will reach those who are quarantined. If schools are expected to close for extended periods, we must address how children will be cared for and how kids who rely on school meal programs will be fed.

A major pandemic outbreak could result in a natural disaster of a scope and magnitude the world has never experienced. Preparing for this potential threat must be a serious priority. TFAH hopes that the guidelines represent the beginning of an ongoing discussion about the best strategies for how to respond to different possible pandemic scenarios.”

Trust for America's Health is a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to saving lives by protecting the health of every community and working to make disease prevention a national priority.
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