



**CITY OF PEABODY
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**

**24 Lowell Street
Peabody, Massachusetts 01960
(978) 538-5926
Fax: (978) 538-5990**

**BOARD OF HEALTH
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**SHARON CAMERON
DIRECTOR**

November 13, 2009

Dear Parents/Guardians of Middle and High School Students:

As you may have heard, a new influenza virus, called the 2009 H1N1 influenza virus, was first identified in the United States in late April 2009. The virus has caused illness ranging from mild to severe, and many children have been affected. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices has recommended that children and young adults aged 6 months through 24 years be vaccinated against 2009 H1N1 as soon as the vaccine is available.

Vaccination is the best way to protect your child from this potentially serious disease. At this time, the Peabody Health Department has a limited quantity of 2009 H1N1 influenza vaccine on-hand and will be prioritizing it for elementary-aged children. However, we are also working with your child's school to prepare to give the 2009 H1N1 influenza vaccine to middle- and high-school-aged children at school when additional vaccine becomes available. We will hold school-based vaccination clinics later this fall and winter, and we will let you know the specific dates once vaccine is on-hand. There will be no cost to you for this vaccine.

The vaccine consent form includes options allowing you to either accept or refuse the vaccination for your child.

- To **accept vaccination** for your child, you must read the "Vaccine Information Statement" form included with this letter about the disease and the vaccine. **You must then sign and date the included consent form** to accept vaccination for your child and return it to the school.
- The back side of the consent form gives the Peabody Health Department permission to share information about your child's vaccination history with your own doctor. You can refuse to sign this "Permission to Share Information" section and still have your child receive the vaccine, as long as you have signed the "Consent for Child's Vaccination" section on the front page.
- If you accept vaccination, the vaccine will be given to your child in school when it is available. We will let you know when the vaccination clinic will take place about one week before.
- If you **refuse** consent for vaccination, the vaccination will **not** be given to your child.
- If at any time you change your mind about having your child vaccinated, you can withdraw your consent by contacting the Peabody Health Department at 978-538-5926.

If you have any questions about the vaccine or the vaccination clinics, please call the Peabody Health Department's Flu Information Line at 978-538-5758. Please visit the CDC's 2009 H1N1 influenza web site at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/parents> as well as the Massachusetts Department of Public Health's website at www.mass.gov/flu for more information especially for parents. Your child's health care provider also can answer your questions about the 2009 H1N1 influenza virus and may be able to give your child the seasonal and H1N1 influenza vaccines as well.

We would like to remind you and your child to continue to wash hands, cover coughs and sneezes, and stay home from school if sick. Please visit http://www.mass.gov/Eeohhs2/docs/dph/cdc/flu/swine_factsheet_parents.pdf for more information on important prevention measures that you can take to help keep your family healthy. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Sharon Cameron
Director of Health and Human Services
City of Peabody