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## News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Thursday, August 26, 2004

Contact: Sarah Landry, OPHS/NVPO  
(202) 690-5566

### **HHS Issues National Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Plan**

HHS Secretary Tommy G. Thompson today unveiled the department's draft Pandemic Influenza Response and Preparedness Plan, which outlines a coordinated national strategy to prepare for and respond to an influenza pandemic. The draft plan can be found online at <http://www.hhs.gov/nvpo/pandemicplan> and is available for public comment for 60 days.

"This plan will serve as our roadmap on how we as a nation, and as a member of the global health community, respond to the next pandemic influenza outbreak, whenever that may be," Secretary Thompson said. "Our proposed strategy draws upon the wealth of experience and knowledge we have gained in responding to a number of recent public health threats, including SARS and avian influenza."

In particular, the plan provides guidance to national, state, and local policy makers and health departments for public health preparation and response in the event of pandemic influenza outbreak.

Influenza pandemics are explosive global events in which most, if not all, persons worldwide are at risk for infection and illness. While rare, the appearance of such a pandemic virus will likely be unaffected by currently available flu vaccines that are modified each year to match the strains of the virus that are known to be in circulation among humans around the world. Unlike the gradual changes that occur in the influenza viruses that appear each year during "flu season," a pandemic influenza virus is one that represents a major, sudden shift in the virus' structure that increases its ability to cause illness in a large proportion of the population. During previous influenza pandemics large numbers of people were ill, sought medical care, were hospitalized and died.

Three influenza pandemics occurred during the 20th century. The most recent influenza pandemic occurred in 1968 with the Hong Kong Flu outbreak, which resulted in nearly 34,000 deaths in the United States. In 1957, the Asian flu pandemic resulted in about 70,000 deaths. The most deadly influenza pandemic outbreak was the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic, which caused illness in roughly 20 to 40 percent of the world's population and more than 50 million deaths worldwide. Between September 1918 and April 1919, approximately 675,000 deaths from the Spanish flu occurred in the United States alone.

Planning and implementing preparedness activities are critical to improving the effectiveness of a response and decreasing the impacts of a pandemic. HHS has increased support for pandemic influenza activities and is engaged in several efforts to enhance the nation's preparedness for such an outbreak. HHS supports pandemic influenza activities in five key areas: surveillance, vaccine development and production, antiviral stockpiling, research, and public health preparedness.

This draft plan includes a core section and twelve annexes. The core plan describes coordination and decision making at the national level; provides an overview of key issues; and outlines action steps that should be taken at the national, state, and local levels before and during a pandemic. Annexes provide additional information to

health departments and private sector organizations for use in developing local preparedness plans as well as additional technical information to support the core document.

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Last Revised: August 25, 2004

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