

Frequently Asked Questions:

November 10, 2009

Explanation of how vaccine is being distributed in San Mateo County and why providers have shortages

- **Why isn't San Mateo County holding mass vaccination clinics?** While many counties are holding mass vaccination clinics, I strongly believe a provider network distribution strategy is the most likely method to get the highest number of priority population groups vaccinated – especially in light of the current vaccine shortage. My confidence in this strategy is based on experience having done mass vaccination clinics in the past with sub-standard results, and the outcomes of our surrounding counties who are currently offering mass clinics with no ability to control distribution to high risk individuals since they serve anyone who walks through the door. In contrast, providers know their patients and their risks, and are in the best position to administer vaccine to the priority groups, especially during the current shortage.
- **What about people without providers?** The vast majority of individuals in priority populations do have providers. The County has near universal healthcare coverage for kids and pregnant women, who are in the highest risk groups. It is true that individuals who do not currently have a provider will not have access to the vaccine in the near term. Until vaccine supply increases, these individuals will need to wait just as many individuals with providers are waiting. As vaccine becomes more readily available, there will be additional distribution to other vaccinators, such as pharmacies, and we still plan to open up "mop-up" mass vaccine clinics for all residents in the future - most likely in January or later.
- **Why doesn't my doctor have vaccine?** The H1N1 vaccine supply shortage is a nationwide phenomenon. Your doctor is doing everything that we have asked of them. It is not the fault of your provider that they do not have vaccine and they have no power to change the current situation. Initial, well-intended, distribution decisions made at the state level, resulted in some small inequitable distributions amongst counties and amongst providers. The Health Department is working closely with the state and with providers to assure equitable distribution for subsequent distributions. Vaccine shipments to providers are continuing on a daily basis, but shortages will remain for the foreseeable future.