

OCTOBER 16, 2009

DIRECTOR'S
NEWS UPDATE



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Seasonal Flu Vaccine

In March, the Medical Services Unit placed an order for 18,000 doses of seasonal influenza vaccine. Normally, this number of doses would be sufficient to vaccinate at risk offender patients and also vaccinate any Oklahoma Department of Corrections (ODOC) employees who might request the influenza vaccine. Once the H1N1 was the focus of public and media attention, the major manufacturers of vaccine focused their resources to producing a vaccine for the H1N1 flu and production of the seasonal flu vaccine diminished.

The supply of seasonal influenza vaccine delivered to ODOC last week was 9,000 doses, half of the original request. Change in suppliers, increased demand, and diversion of production to H1N1 have limited the number of doses available to ODOC. This number of doses is adequate to

vaccinate at risk offenders, which is the primary responsibility of the agency. Unfortunately, the current supply is not adequate to vaccinate employees, and at this time we do not anticipate receiving any additional doses. Employees have opportunity to obtain vaccine in the community, including the Oklahoma State Department of Health, which provides vaccine at no charge. Many health insurance plans also cover the cost of the flu vaccine. If additional doses should become available, our suppliers have pledged to obtain more vaccine for ODOC, which could then be shared with employees. Cost of the vaccine has never been a factor in providing vaccine to our employees, only availability. This influenza season is different, and ODOC Medical Services is committed to do all within its power to provide adequately for all those they serve.