



News Release

Contact: Mary Kay Grasmick, Wisconsin Hospital Association
608-274-1820 (office) 608-575-7516 (cell)

Hospitals Plan for Smallpox, Form Special Care Teams

MADISON (December 9, 2002)----- Wisconsin hospitals have submitted their plans to the State of Wisconsin that detail how they would care for victims of smallpox, as part of the state's terrorism preparedness and response planning effort. The state plan calls for vaccinating thousands of hospital employees who volunteer for special teams trained to care for the first smallpox victims, in the event of an outbreak. Nearly 99% of Wisconsin's hospitals said they would form, train and vaccinate a care team.

"If there was a smallpox outbreak, the first cases of smallpox would likely show up in our emergency departments, and we want to be ready," said Wisconsin Hospital Association President Steve Brenton. "Our mission-driven not-for-profit health care hospitals are truly on the forefront of helping communities across the state deal with any potential disaster they may encounter."

Each hospital care team is comprised of nurses, physicians, specialists, housekeepers, and others who would be in contact with the patient, their clothing or their bedding. The immunization is strictly voluntary for employees.

Hospitals submitted the number of staff they want vaccinated to the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services (DHFS) on Friday, December 6. Hospitals and public health officials also have plans in place to move to mass vaccination clinics, if a smallpox outbreak occurs. President Bush is expected to announce a plan that calls for the voluntary vaccination of about 500,000 health care workers nationwide soon.

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