

Colorado



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## Local Health Role in Pandemic Disease Education: Larimer County, Colorado

Local health agencies in Colorado are the first line of response against communicable disease outbreaks. As “all emergencies are local,” the local public health agency in Larimer County, Colorado, developed its own brand and campaign for pandemic influenza education, kicked off with a pandemic flu awareness open house for the media and partner agencies on January 24, 2007.

### Community Readiness Begins With You

The project has been a community-wide venture. Since March 2006, Larimer County organizations have been working together to create a pandemic flu plan for the county. Joining the health department have been health care providers, local governments, businesses, utilities, non-profit agencies, faith groups, media, schools, law enforcement, fire departments and police, among others. In June 2006, Larimer County sponsored a pandemic flu retreat where more than 300 individuals representing multiple Larimer County agencies, communities, businesses and government gathered to learn about pandemic flu and how Larimer County can prepare for an outbreak.

The county’s pandemic planning partnership served in an advisory role for the new resources. The partners include representatives from law enforcement and fire, hospitals, the United Way, Red Cross, utilities, the business sector, schools and universities and municipalities. The event reflected the collaboration among the participants in pandemic influenza planning. Representatives of the school district and the Fort Collins area chamber of commerce spoke on behalf of the education and business communities. The City of Fort Collins donated the time and expertise of a graphic artist to design the brochure. The City of Loveland donated the assistance of a public information officer to help with the many details of research, writing, videotaping and brochure distribution.

County staff tested the brochure by asking county customers and staff to review it and respond to a simple usability survey. The staff involved were able to make some changes based on very specific positive and negative feedback. The pandemic planning partnership also reviewed the brochure and offered suggestions. At this time, the brochure is available in English, and a Spanish version will be published soon.

The website was released to a small number of Larimer County residents a month prior to the public release through a targeted newsletter. Those several



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weeks became the testing month, before sharing the resources via the media and the community meeting. Interns from Colorado State University assisted throughout the project and continue to keep the website content up-to-date.

The information line, **970-498-PFLU**, allows callers to listen to an update on pandemic influenza. Callers may request additional information. Designed to complement the website, the information line will allow easy access to information for those who do not have Internet access.

### **Campaign Launch January 24**

The Larimer County Department of Health and Environment scheduled an open house to introduce the department's new pandemic influenza resources: a website, a brochure in English and Spanish and a telephone information line.

A member of the Board of County Commissioners introduced the meeting of almost 200 people, including both television and print media. Dr. Adrienne LeBailly, the department director, discussed pandemic influenza and local planning efforts. The communications director explained the new tools available to all county residents. The theme of the event was, "We aren't prepared until you are prepared." Dr. LeBailly urged the audience to make preparations for their own families, pointing out that neither government nor physicians will be able to prevent disease if a pandemic spreads to the area.

The new website also is attracting attention from several other states. About 100,000 brochures were distributed in the first week, necessitating consideration of an additional printing. Information line callers who request brochures had to be limited to 40 brochures each at this time.

### **About Larimer County**

Larimer County, located in north central Colorado, is the seventh largest county in Colorado, with about 265,000 people. The largest city in Larimer County is Fort Collins. The county of 2,640 square miles extends west to the Continental Divide and includes several mountain communities and Rocky Mountain National Park, irrigated farmland and vast stretches of scenic ranch lands, forests and high mountain peaks. Tourism is an important economic component of the county. The county's largest employers are Hewlett-Packard, Anheuser Busch, Teledyne WaterPik and Colorado State University.

### **Supporting Documents**

- Website: [www.larimerflu.org](http://www.larimerflu.org)
- Pandemic Flu: The Basics: [www.larimerflu.org/flu\\_pamphlet.pdf](http://www.larimerflu.org/flu_pamphlet.pdf)
- Video from January 24 community meeting: [www.coloradoan.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070125/VIDEO/70124024](http://www.coloradoan.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070125/VIDEO/70124024)
- Larimer County Pandemic Flu Plan: <http://fluplan.larimerhealth.org>

### **Additional Information**

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