TO: Regulatory Services  
Regional Directors and State Office Managers

FROM: Veronda L. Durden  
Assistant Commissioner  
Regulatory Services

SUBJECT: S&CC 06-20 – Pandemic Influenza

APPLIES TO: Nursing Facilities (NFs), Assisted Living Facilities (ALFs), and Intermediate Care Facilities Serving Persons with Mental Retardation and a Related Condition (ICFs-MR/RC)

DATE: March 6, 2007

This memorandum is to provide guidance to NFs, ALFs, ICFs-MR/RC, and Regulatory Services staff on the resources available for preparing for an influenza pandemic.

An influenza pandemic is an explosive global event in which most, if not all, people worldwide are at risk for influenza infection and illness. Unlike seasonal influenza outbreaks, a pandemic influenza is caused by a new strain of virus against which there is little or no natural immunity and no vaccine is available.

On average there are three pandemic influenza outbreaks in a century. The last pandemic flu outbreak was in 1968. The Department of State Health Services (DSHS) began developing its Pandemic Influenza Plan for Texas in 2003. Although the exact timing and nature of the next pandemic cannot be predicted, preparedness planning is imperative in order to minimize its impact. While evacuation will not be an issue in a pandemic flu outbreak, it is critical for long-term care facilities to have coordinated plans to respond effectively to the outbreak and ensure the continuation of essential services.

The Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS) Quality Monitoring Program has several resources available at its Web site that provide valuable information on the subject at the state, national, and international levels. It has a planning template and other guides to assist long-term care providers in developing their own pandemic influenza preparedness plan. These are available at the Web address below:

http://mqa.dhs.state.tx.us/qmweb/PandemicFlu.htm

In addition, NFs may request that their nurse quality consultants with DADS Quality Monitoring Program provide an inservice on influenza at their facility, provided this is not used as a corrective action for a deficiency cited during their survey. Other providers may view the presentation entitled Pandemic Influenza Preparedness for LTC Facilities online at the Web address above in lieu of the inservice on influenza.

If you have questions related to this process, please contact a nursing facility policy specialist with the Policy, Rules, and Curriculum Development unit at (512) 438-3161.