



## News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Thursday, May 24, 2007

Contact: HHS Press Office  
(202) 690-6343

### **HHS Convenes America's Leaders to Help Americans Prepare for Pandemic Flu**

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has launched the Pandemic Flu Leadership Blog, a five-week-long blog about pandemic preparedness. Participant bloggers include some of the nation's most influential business, health care, faith-based and community leaders. This online event is part of a new campaign to help Americans prepare for a potential influenza pandemic and engage U.S. leaders in the challenge to help others prepare.

"The conversation about individual preparedness for pandemic flu must extend nationwide through all possible channels, including social media and the Internet," HHS Secretary Mike Leavitt said. "The blog summit is an innovative and efficient forum for bringing together leaders for a lively discussion on the pandemic preparedness movement."

HHS is one of the first government agencies to utilize the participatory nature of the Internet to create a dialogue around a specific issue or campaign. This effort to engage individuals in an online conversation is the one of many steps HHS will be taking to carry out its campaign to encourage Americans to prepare. By preparing now, individuals will be better able to withstand the impact of a pandemic, slow the spread of disease, and lessen the overall impact to themselves, their families and to society.

Ideas and dialogue generated during the leadership blog will contribute to HHS' upcoming pandemic influenza leadership forum in June, an event which will bring together approximately 80 U.S. leaders representing the business, faith, civic and health care communities. The dynamic leadership forum will call on participants to help Americans become more prepared for an influenza pandemic by leveraging their influence and expertise in their communities to actively promote individual pandemic preparedness.

"It may not be possible to predict with certainty when the next flu pandemic will occur or how severe it will be, but it is essential to prepare ahead of time and that time is now," Secretary Leavitt said. "We are the first generation ever to have an opportunity to prepare in advance of a pandemic. Government alone can't prepare the nation for a pandemic. This is a shared responsibility and the challenge requires leadership from those most trusted and respected in their communities."

The pandemic-focused leadership blog gives national leaders the opportunity to participate in an ongoing and critical conversation about the potential impact of a pandemic on individuals, families, communities and workplaces. Participating bloggers will be asked specific questions related to the threat of a pandemic in the U.S. and will collaborate on ideas for what can be done to help their employees, constituents, customers, congregations and clients prepare now.

Approximately 16 influential leaders, including leading authorities on pandemic flu, will blog throughout the next five weeks. A few of the participant bloggers include Pierre Omidyar, Founder and Chairman of Ebay and Co-founder of Omidyar Network; David Eisner, CEO of the Corporation for National and Community Service; and Greg Dworkin, Founding Editor of Flu Wiki and Chief of Pediatric Pulmonology and Medical Director of the Pediatric Inpatient Unit at Danbury Hospital in Danbury, Conn.

The Pandemic Flu Leadership Blog will continue through June 27 and is open to the public and media. Comments are welcome and encouraged by all who visit the blog at <http://blog.pandemicflu.gov>.

In conjunction with the blog, HHS will hold a Pandemic Influenza Leadership Forum on June 13 in Washington, DC with representatives of the business, faith, civic and health care communities.

Using materials prepared by HHS, local leaders will be asked to reach out to the people they represent with the essential steps necessary for pandemic flu preparedness. By preparing now, individuals will be better able to withstand the impact of a pandemic, slow the spread of disease, and lessen the overall impact to themselves, their families and society.

An influenza pandemic occurs when a new influenza ("flu") virus appears in humans; the new virus causes serious illness and death, and spreads easily from person to person worldwide. Past influenza pandemics, like the one that occurred in 1918, have led to: high levels of illness; death; disruption in normal, everyday activities like going to school, work, or other public gatherings, and economic loss. For more information visit: [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov).

###

---

Note: All HHS press releases, fact sheets and other press materials are available at <http://www.hhs.gov/news>.

Last revised: May 24, 2007