

**Tool I: Sample Press Release**

 **For Immediate Release:**

June 24, 2016

**Arkansas to implement pandemic flu agreement with pharmacy**

The Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) and Fred’s Stores of Tennessee, Inc. agreed this week to coordinate a pandemic influenza vaccination campaign so that the public has faster access to flu shots in the case of a pandemic. This is the nation’s first partnership of this kind.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) have worked together for the last four years to assess best practices for increasing coordination between public health and pharmacies. As a result, a template Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was developed with input from both pharmacy and public health stakeholders, and Arkansas is the first state to implement it.

“After the 2009 H1N1 influenza pandemic, it was evident that there were great opportunities for public health and pharmacies to partner together prior to a pandemic to further improve coordination, collaboration and communication,” said Dr. Nathaniel Smith, Arkansas Department of Health Director and State Health Officer. “This work has focused on determining a standardized approach across states, given that many pharmacies work on a regional or national level.”

Community pharmacies like Fred’s Pharmacies now provide 1 in 5 of all seasonal influenza vaccines to adults each year. Improved coordination with pharmacies, and the addition of pharmacy vaccinators, could have significant impact on overall vaccine administration capacity.

Improved coordination ultimately saves lives by leveraging the strengths of all partners, including existing vaccine management, distribution, and administration infrastructures, resulting in earlier and more broadly available pandemic vaccination.

This MOU addresses utilizing existing infrastructures to rapidly provide vaccinations to the general public during an influenza pandemic and addresses provider enrollment and training, vaccine allocation, vaccine distribution, tracking, and communications.