

In August 2006, Governor Huntsman appointed a Task Force for Pandemic Influenza Preparedness made up of statewide community leaders to convene in a series of open meetings over the next six months. The charge of the Task Force is:

- **To provide community recommendations on key policy issues relating to pandemic influenza**
- **To revise the Utah Pandemic Influenza Response Plan based on feedback and recommendations of the task force**
- **To be a catalyst for legislative action that would improve the overall response to a pandemic and other public health emergency**
- **To be a forum for community education on pandemic influenza**

The need for public input into the pandemic influenza response plan is essential because of the social and economic consequences, as well as health impact, a pandemic will cause across our communities. A pandemic will affect all sectors of society. The absenteeism caused by illness will impact businesses of every size, our schools, and the delivery of every kind of goods and services to individuals, homes, and communities.

Government must work closely with the private sector to ensure an appropriate response to a pandemic that will facilitate the maintenance of essential services. Key services such as food service and production, energy and all utilities, and health care will be disrupted by a pandemic. With preparation and planning at all levels in the community we can reduce the level of disruption and maintain a necessary level of essential services.

We need to set priorities on service delivery and medical response capabilities. The way the public receives health care will be very different during a pandemic when there may be a shortage of medical personnel to deliver care and medical equipment such as hospital beds and ventilators. During these task force proceedings, we need to gather our medical community and have a dialogue on how we can make the best decisions for the people in our communities when the system is strained to the limit and beyond.

The work of the task force will produce benefits even if a pandemic never occurs or turns out to be mild, because preparation is transferable to all public health emergencies. History has shown that pandemics do occur periodically so the steps we take now will have long-term benefits not only in readying our health care system but also in all public health emergencies and natural disasters.