

Headline: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Ad Council Launch National Campaign to Help Prevent the Spread of the H1N1 Flu Virus

Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius announced today that the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is joining with the Ad Council to launch a series of national television public service advertisements (PSAs) designed to encourage Americans to take steps to protect themselves from the 2009 H1N1 flu virus. The ads are designed specifically to reach children, parents, pregnant women and young adults. A second series of PSAs, aimed at encouraging high-risk populations to get the H1N1 vaccination, is launching in late October.

Included in the PSAs being released today are new spots featuring characters from the popular Sesame Street and the winning spots from the recent 2009 Flu Prevention PSA Contest sponsored by HHS.

The Ad Council is distributing the following PSAs nationwide today and the ads will be supported in airtime donated by television stations nationwide. The spots will also be available at flu.gov, the government's one-stop Web site for all the latest information on both seasonal and H1N1 flu:

Ø Young Adults: The winning PSA video from HHS' national 2009 Flu Prevention PSA Contest on YouTube (featuring the "hip hop doc"), along with four additional videos from the contest, will aim to reach those ages 17 to 24. More than 50,000 votes were cast for the contest. The PSAs are available in :30 and :60 lengths and include a Spanish-language spot.

Ø Parents and Pregnant Women: Produced by HHS, a new series of TV ads featuring Olympic Gold Medalist Jackie Joyner-Kersey, singer Marc Anthony and actress Amy Ryan, aim to reach parents and pregnant women. The PSA featuring Marc Anthony is also available in Spanish and the ads are in :30 length.

Ø Parents and Children: Designed to reach children under the age of five and their parents, Sesame Workshop, the non-profit educational organization behind Sesame Street, produced two new television PSAs. Sesame Street's Elmo and Rosita have a new song teaching children the proper way to sneeze while Elmo and Luis talk to parents about the importance of creating a plan to keep their children home from school if they get sick. These messages build on a PSA Sesame Workshop released with HHS and the Ad Council earlier this year which explained the importance of practicing healthy habits this flu season. The PSAs are available in English and Spanish and are: 30 length.

"While getting a flu vaccine is the best way for Americans to protect themselves and their families from the flu, as we wait for the H1N1 vaccine to get distributed out into local doctors offices and sites across the country, there are critically important things that Americans can be doing right now to keep their friends and family healthy and safe and to prevent the spread of flu," said Secretary Sebelius. "These new prevention PSAs will help us get the word out about what to do about the flu. Fighting the flu is a shared responsibility between all of us and we are so grateful to all those who helped create these wonderful new messages. We are hopeful that Americans will spread these new PSAs virally and use to them to help stop the spread of H1N1 and seasonal flu. "

The H1N1 flu virus is contagious and spreads person-to-person the same way that seasonal influenza does. The virus has quickly spread worldwide and in June 2009 the World Health Organization declared a global H1N1 flu pandemic.

After a summer of elevated influenza activity levels, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recorded as many flu cases in September as it does when flu season normally peaks later in the fall and winter.

Children, young adults under 25, pregnant women and adults 25-64 with underlying health conditions, like asthma, are more susceptible to falling ill to the H1N1 flu and are at higher risk for serious medical complications, including hospitalization and death.

To date millions of Americans have gotten the H1N1 flu virus and more than 600 have died since the spring from H1N1 flu-related complications; including children and pregnant women.

The new PSAs focus on the importance of providing Americans with accurate information on the simple steps they can take to help prevent the flu. The PSAs encourage audiences to visit www.flu.gov to get more information on how to stay healthy.

"Since the outbreak of the H1N1 flu, many Americans have expressed concern about how they can protect themselves from being infected," said Peggy Conlon, president and CEO of the Ad Council. "We are proud to continue our longstanding partnership with HHS for these critical PSAs that will educate Americans about steps they can take to stay healthy."

The Ad Council has been partnering with HHS to develop PSA campaigns that address critical health issues since the 1950s. Their successful collaborations have included public service messages about the polio epidemic, drug abuse and, more recently, obesity prevention.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

The Department of Health and Human Services (www.hhs.gov) is the United States government's principal agency for protecting the health of all Americans and providing essential human services, especially for those who are least able to help themselves. HHS is leading the medical response for the federal government for the H1N1 flu pandemic. The department includes more than 300 programs, covering a wide spectrum of activities, including medical and social science research, preventing outbreak of infectious disease, including immunization services, assuring food and drug safety, welfare, and Medicare and Medicaid.

The Advertising Council

The Ad Council (www.adcouncil.org) is a private, non-profit organization that marshals talent from the advertising and communications industries, the facilities of the media, and the resources of the business and non-profit communities to produce, distribute and promote public service campaigns on behalf of non-profit organizations and government agencies in issue areas such as improving the quality of life for children, preventive health, education, community well-being, environmental preservation and strengthening families.

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