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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Influenza Arrives Locally

First Confirmed Case in Washtenaw County; Vaccination Recommended

YPSILANTI, Mich., Nov 7, 2013 – Washtenaw County Public Health is announcing the first case of lab-confirmed influenza for the 2013-2014 flu season. The diagnosed individual was hospitalized. The individual has since been released and is recovering. Public Health reminds residents that annual flu vaccination and basic prevention strategies like hand washing provide the best protection against illness. Annual flu vaccination is recommended for everyone six months and older.

"Last year we had 199 flu hospitalizations and 8 deaths in Washtenaw County. If a new disease caused that much illness and death in our county, people would be lined up for blocks, and breaking down doors for the vaccine," says Dr. Alice Penrose, MD, MPH, Medical Director for Washtenaw County Public Health. "Unfortunately, it seems we've become a little too accustomed to seasonal flu – even though it really is a new disease each year," continued Dr. Penrose.

Washtenaw County Public Health offers flu vaccine by appointment. Please call 734-544-6700 to schedule. The flu shot is \$20, and Flu Mist (nasal spray) is \$25. Medicaid is accepted; please bring your card. Public Health is unable to bill Medicare Part B for the 2013-14 season. Medicare Part B participants must go to a physician or pharmacy for their flu vaccine. Public Health cannot bill private insurance but can provide receipts.

Residents may utilize the HealthMap Vaccine Finder http://flushot.healthmap.org/ to identify other locations where flu vaccines are being offered.

Although most people who get the flu will recover without medical care, some people will develop complications that result in hospitalization, and occasionally, in death. Flu seasons are unpredictable and can be severe. Compared with other infections like the common cold, influenza is more likely to cause severe illness and life-threatening complications. Studies going back 30 years show that seasonal flu-related deaths have ranged from about 3,000 people to 49,000 people annually in the US.

According to the Michigan Department of Community Health, "Even healthy people can get the flu, and it can be serious. Everyone six months and older should get flu vaccine every year. This means you. This season, protect yourself - and those around you - by getting vaccinated." Additional prevention strategies include:

- Wash hands frequently, especially after coughing, sneezing and handling used tissues.
- Avoid close contact with those who have colds or flu-like symptoms. Stay away from others if you are sick.
- After contact with a person who is ill, wash your hands and keep your fingers away from your eyes, nose and mouth to prevent the spread of the virus.
- Boost your immune system by eating a healthy diet and getting regular physical activity and plenty of rest.

For more information about Washtenaw County Public Health, please visit http://publichealth.ewashtenaw.org, or call us at 734-544-6700. Washtenaw County Public Health promotes health and works to prevent disease or injury in our community.

Visit the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) seasonal flu page at http://www.michigan.gov/mdch/0,1607,7-132-2940_2955_22779_40563-138142--,00.html.

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