DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Public Health Service

Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention (CDC)
Atlanta GA 30333

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Dear Colleague:

We are at a crossroads in public health. In 1980, we eradicated smallpox as a naturally occurring disease. Now this contagious, deadly disease may be brought back as a biological weapon. The most effective tool we have against the disease is the smallpox vaccine, a vaccine not without its own risks.

President Bush has initiated a national preparedness program to protect our citizens against smallpox as a biological weapon. Communities have been asked to form smallpox preparedness teams that are ready for a smallpox attack on this country. Some of you must now decide whether you will participate in this effort and receive the vaccination so that you might protect others. Your decision must be weighed carefully.

As you consider your participation on a smallpox preparedness team, please read the materials in the enclosed Smallpox Pre-Vaccination Information Package before making your decision. The Vaccine Information Statement (VIS) and supplemental fact sheets and forms are included in this package. A list of materials follows:

1. Vaccine Information Statement
2. Smallpox Vaccine Information Statement Supplement A: Reactions after Vaccination
3. Smallpox Vaccine Information Statement Supplement B: Vaccination Site Appearance and Care
4. Smallpox Vaccine Information Statement Supplement C: Skin Conditions That Mean You Should NOT Get Smallpox Vaccine
5. Smallpox Vaccine Information Statement Supplement D: A Weakened Immune System Means You Should NOT Get Smallpox Vaccine
6. Smallpox Vaccine Information Statement Supplement E: Pregnancy and Breastfeeding Mean You Should NOT Get Smallpox Vaccine
7. Pre-Event Smallpox Vaccination Screening Worksheet

If you have any doubts, you may discuss these issues with your healthcare provider prior to vaccination. Your safety is our highest priority.

We recognize the decision about whether or not to participate in a smallpox preparedness team is difficult. We urge you to read, understand, and weigh all the information concerning your personal risks against your ability to help protect those in your community against a potential attack. We want you to err on the side of caution and not put you or your loved ones at risk of a serious adverse reaction.