



Gaston County Health Department

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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H1N1 Hotline to Close March 31

GASTONIA — The Gaston County Health Department will cease operation of its H1N1 Hotline at the end of the month.

“The sheer volume of calls we received is proof positive that this was the right thing to do,” said Gaston County Health Director Colleen Bridger. “The emergence of H1N1 flu was a complex and changing issue, and I’m glad we were able to serve as a local resource to answer questions and help people make the right decisions for their health.”

Since opening September 14, 2009, the Gaston County H1N1 Hotline has fielded more than 3,400 calls. At the height of the H1N1 crisis in October and November, calls spiked. The most calls taken in a single day was 163 in mid-November.

The H1N1 Hotline provided the latest information on H1N1 flu, its symptoms and the vaccine – the service was free and anonymous, though callers were asked to give their zip code and general identifying information.

That information shows that the Health Department fielded calls from across Gaston, Cleveland and Lincoln counties and upstate South Carolina. Calls also came from as far away as Salisbury, Winston-Salem, Asheville, Arkansas and Mississippi, most likely from travelers who saw the hotline advertised while passing through the county or found the number on the Internet. The hotline number was heavily advertised in all Health Department flu communications, as well as on local government vehicles and donated space on the Pharr Yarns billboard at I-85.

Most callers asked questions about the H1N1 vaccine and its availability, as well as how the disease affected children, the elderly and people with chronic diseases.

Decreasing demand prompted the Health Department to close the hotline. “We started seeing a decline in calls around the holidays,” Bridger said. “We waited to make sure we didn’t have another wave of H1N1, but at this point, I think the hotline has done all it can do.”

No one knows whether H1N1 flu will become active again. The Health Department still has free H1N1 vaccine. Call 704-853-5003 to make an appointment.

The hotline number, 704-854-H1N1 (4161) will be forwarded to another Health Department line, so callers can still ask questions. The hotline will be reactivated if the need should arise again.

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