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TO: Local Health and Tribal Partners

FR: Jeffrey P. Davis, MD, Chief Medical Officer and State Epidemiologist for Communicable Diseases

RE: Religious Practices during the Outbreak of Influenza A H1N1 Virus Infections

The following guidance from the Wisconsin Division of Public Health is intended to enable local and tribal health partners to serve as a resource to local religious leaders during the outbreak of Influenza A H1N1 virus infections in the state.

Consider replacing the use of common cups or intinction (dipping the wafer into the wine or grape juice into a common cup) methods for distributing wine or grape juice during communion with use of individual, single-use disposable cups or individual re-usable cups that are washed in hot water and detergent and rinsed with dilute bleach solution after use.

- 1) Persons preparing or dispensing communion wafers and cups should wash their hands with soap and water or use alcohol hand sanitizer before handling them. Sick individuals should not participate in preparing or dispensing communion.
- 2) If religious ceremonies or practices include hand shaking in a large group, consider making hand sanitizer available at the entrance to a sanctuary or other convenient location.
- 3) Congregation members should be encouraged to stay home if they have symptoms of respiratory illness (fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose). Tips for staying healthy may be distributed to members at places of worship (see below).

More information about Influenza A H1N1 virus infections is available on the Wisconsin Department of Health Services website at <http://www.pandemic.wisconsin.gov/>

Tips for Staying Healthy

- Wash your hands often. Be sure to use warm water and enough soap to create a lather. Rub hands together briskly for about 15 seconds (about as long as it takes to sing "Happy Birthday"). Rinse your hands completely to allow the water to carry the soap, dirt and germs away. If soap and water are not available, using an alcohol gel such as Purell[®] is a good alternative.
- Try not to touch your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose or mouth. If you do need to touch these parts of your body, wash your hands first.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Practice other good habits, such as not smoking, getting plenty of sleep, staying active, managing stress, drinking plenty of water and eating nutritious food.

To protect others if you get sick

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the wastebasket and wash your hands right away. If soap and water are not available, using an alcohol gel such as Purell[®] is a good alternative. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands.
- Stay home from work and school and avoid large public gatherings such as places of worship, shopping centers, sports arenas and movie theaters if you are coughing, sneezing and blowing your nose.