

H1N1 National Emergency

Challenge:

- > Manage call volume and simplify processes in response to distribution of H1N1 vaccine.

Solution:

- > Protocol Global Solutions Call Center Program

Results:

- > Successfully handled 535,314 calls
- > Achieved simplified eligibility prescreening of patients
- > Eliminated patient waiting lines
- > Required no additional local services, i.e., police and fire departments for traffic control and security
- > Made scheduling and customer service available 24/7

Health Department streamlines H1N1 distribution via call center solution.

One County Health Department in Illinois specifically states its mission as promoting physical and emotional health, preventing illness, injury and disability, and protecting the health of its residents from environmental risk factors. It maintains three locations and serves nearly one million residents.

Despite their technological capabilities and human resources, this Department continually seeks process improvements to meet the needs of its constituents. Using an easy-to-manage call center platform solution from Protocol Global Solutions, this Department successfully streamlined its distribution of the H1N1 vaccine and better anticipated its upcoming need for more.

Challenge:

In the spring of 2009, it was evident to Health Departments everywhere that the fall flu season would be challenging. Seasonal flu would present its routine problems. But now the H1N1 flu strain would tax public health resources tenfold.

Without help, Departments could foresee:

- > extended patient waiting lines
- > delays due to patient prescreening for eligibility
- > high call volume of patients with questions
- > the need for additional local services, i.e., police and fire departments for traffic control and security enforcement
- > the potential for scheduling mishaps due to appointments being taken at three separate locations

Initially, one Illinois County Health Department anticipated an estimated response of approximately 30,000 people. The reality was overwhelmingly higher. Actual inquiries from the public and need for the vaccine escalated quickly to a number much larger than expected.



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The Solution:

Knowing the organizational and distribution challenges that they were about to face with the arrival of the novel H1N1 vaccine, this Health Department immediately recognized the need to outsource call center activity to make scheduling and rescheduling of appointments and the fielding of questions as simple as possible. So they contacted Protocol Global Solutions.

As a leading provider of call center services, Protocol then helped the Department launch a program replete with call center support and a real-time, web-based scheduling system on October 19, 2009. Sixty-two trained internal call center agents began taking calls, with an additional 20 agents brought onboard within days. Total calls amounted to 535,314—a startling increase over the expected call volume. This resulted in an average call volume of 66,914 calls per day, with each day's average appointments totaling 3,317.

The plan provided for live agents who spoke both English and Spanish, and their services were available 24/7. They responded to frequently asked questions, referred callers to the proper agencies, and scheduled/rescheduled appointments. Scripts with basic eligibility criteria were also provided to help the Department screen calls for only the highest priority patients.

Department personnel also had access to a website featuring appointments at all clinic locations in real-time. This helped eliminate overbooking. More importantly, this information enabled the Department to justify to the Center for Disease Control their need for additional vaccine based on scheduled need.

Results:

The call center solution has been operational for only a few short weeks, and yet its success is being applauded by the people, the press and other public health providers. States the Health Department Director, "This way, (people) wait at (their) convenience on the phone. Once you hit the doors, the goal is in and out in 10 minutes or less." With a cost of just \$6,000 a day of federal money earmarked for delivering the vaccine, it's money well spent to get children, in particular, vaccinated and control crowds that put a strain on public safety resources.

