

# Flu pandemic in prison: A model for public health preparedness

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When pandemics occur, correctional facilities are not immune. With more than 9 million people incarcerated across the globe 2.25 million in U.S. jails and prisons alone it is vital that correctional officials and health professionals be prepared for a worst-case scenario that involves pandemic influenza reaching inmates and staff.

With collaborative planning and training, prison and [public health](#) officials can help control [influenza outbreaks](#) behind bars, according to an article in the April issue of the *Journal of Correctional Health Care* (published by SAGE).

A two-day conference on prison [pandemic](#) preparedness held in Georgia in 2007 could serve as a model for such training. Administrators, medical doctors, registered nurses, physician assistants, and pharmacists were among the participants, as well as state and local public health officials.

The objectives were to educate participants about [pandemic flu](#) issues in prison settings, provide impetus for initial planning in Georgia's prisons, and elicit ideas about how the prisons could best prepare for and respond to pandemic flu. Topics included nonpharmaceutical interventions, health care surge capacity, and prison-community interfaces.

Effective training about pandemic influenza requires more than just classroom lectures or checklists, the authors write. The conference employed interactive methods and educational games that recent studies

have found effective in training "adult learners." Experiential learning closely resembles the way adults learn on the job and offers a more hands-on approach compared to traditional didactic, classroom-based learning.

The training techniques appeared to be very effective. Scores on a test after the training were an average of 69% correct compared to a pretest, which had an average score of 42% correct.

As important, the conference served to forge new partnerships among correctional health and public health officials responsible for pandemic planning.

More information: The article, "How Public Health and Prisons Can Partner for [Pandemic Influenza](#) Preparedness: A Report From Georgia" in the April issue of the Journal of Correctional Health Care can be accessed free for a limited time at [jcx.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/15/2/118](http://jcx.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/15/2/118)

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