

*Top 10 Cities at Risk are in TX, OK, NM, WA, CA, MD, LA*

SANTA BARBARA, Calif., Oct. 12, 2013 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- With the federal government shutdown causing a suspension of its national influenza surveillance, Direct Relief today released a report about current flu patterns and high-risk areas in the U.S. based on open source epidemiological tools and information as well as information provided by nonprofit community health centers and clinics nationwide. The Centers for Disease Controls estimates that influenza kills approximately 36,000 persons annually in the United States

The report shows overall early-season influenza slightly less severe than at the same point last year, but with risk elevated in the Southern states from New Mexico across to Arkansas to Louisiana and Nevada also experiencing flu rates somewhat higher than at the same period last year.

**Top 10 Cities to Watch:** The report also highlights 10 cities to watch (listed below) as they represent critical risk areas across the country due to high rates of influenza-like illness (ILI) per 100,000 people as well as a combination of high rates of change in ILI, high volatility in rates of ILI and/or high risk factors associated with high proportions of very young or very elderly populations.

Direct Relief is the only U.S. nonprofit organization licensed to distribute prescription medications in all 50 states and runs the country's largest charitable medicines program, which provides medications and supplies to over 1,100 nonprofit clinics and health centers for patients with low incomes and without insurance. For several years, Direct Relief has worked with

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vaccine manufacturers and, on occasion, national chain pharmacies, to distribute the flu vaccine or flu-shot vouchers throughout its network of health centers and clinics during flu season and has begun receiving requests for assistance this year.

"With the federal shutdown suspending this important surveillance function, we recognized the importance of sharing more broadly the nationwide public-health information that Direct Relief already is gathering and examining carefully for the purpose of mobilizing and providing philanthropic resources nationwide for the nonprofit safety net providers who serve our country's most vulnerable people," said Thomas Tighe, Direct Relief's President and CEO. Direct Relief will continue to issue weekly flu reports throughout the season.

The report and analysis of regional patterns combines information derived from Direct Relief's extensive interaction with health centers and clinics nationwide with information and tools developed and by Google, [HealthMap.org](http://HealthMap.org) and Palantir.

The following are the top 10 cities and areas that appear to warrant particular attention based on current data and factors, such as high percentages of young and elderly residents typically most vulnerable to heightened risks from influenza:

.	<b>Addison (Dallas-Ft. Worth)</b>
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TX
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.	<b>Oklahoma City</b>
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OK
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.	<b>San Antonio</b>
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TX

• **Tulsa**

OK

• **Albuquerque**

NM

• **Lubbock**

TX

• **Seattle**

WA

• **San Francisco**

CA

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•	<b>Baltimore</b>
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MD
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•	<b>Baton Rouge</b>
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LA
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The complete report is available [here](#) .

**About Direct Relief** Direct Relief is a leading medical relief organization, active in all 50 states and in 70 countries, and the only nonprofit organization licensed to distribute prescription medications in all 50 U.S. states. Direct Relief supports more than 1,100 nonprofit health centers and clinics across the U.S. in emergencies and on an ongoing basis by providing free medications and supplies for people in need. It is among the largest privately funded medical aid organizations in the world, and annually earns top charity ratings, including four-star and "top-notch" rating from Charity Navigator, and a 99% fundraising efficiency rating from Forbes magazine. For more information visit [www.DirectRelief.org](http://www.DirectRelief.org) .

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