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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### AVMED HEALTH PLANS ASSISTS IN PROVIDING FLU VACCINES TO GAINESVILLE SCHOOLS

**MIAMI (June 16, 2010)** – AvMed Health Plans announced that it will once again support the University of Florida Emerging Pathogens Institute in providing the schools of Alachua County with FluMist vaccines. Last year, in collaboration with the University of Florida, the Alachua County Health Department and the Alachua County School Board, AvMed assisted in providing Alachua County Public Schools with flu vaccines.

A recent study in Japan over the past 10 years has proven that schools are a breeding ground for diseases. By implementing a mandatory school based immunization program, deaths in Japan as a result of influenza and pneumonia dropped by 50%. Accordingly, all deaths in the country dropped by half as well. However, once the program was eliminated, deaths rose back to their prior figures.

As a result of this study, Alachua County Public Schools decided to provide influenza immunizations to eligible students. In 2009, the program immunized approximately 70% of the eligible public and private preschool, elementary, and middle school children. With the help of AvMed, this year the program will expand to high school students.

Dr. Parker Small, professor emeritus in the department of pathology, immunology and laboratory medicine in the University of Florida's College of Medicine, is one of the leaders of the flu vaccine campaign for Alachua County. He estimates that 20,000 doses of the vaccine will be needed to continue to grow the campaign. "AvMed is pleased to make this a reality," said Ed Hannum, AvMed's President and Chief Operating Officer. "We are committed to quality of life in the communities where we live and work," Hannum said.

With more than 40 years in Florida, AvMed Health Plans is solely focused on providing health coverage to Florida citizens and businesses. AvMed has over 350 employees in Gainesville. It is part of Gainesville-based SantaFe HealthCare, which also includes Haven Hospice and The Village. The University of Florida Emerging Pathogens Institute has a main goal to, "Develop the outreach capability to educate the people of Florida on steps they can take to avoid human diseases as well as help our private sector avoid diseases that affect plants and animals." Both entities are dedicated to improving the health of Floridians.

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