




## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** August 12, 2014

**TO:** Residential Care Facilities for the Elderly in Contra Costa County

**FROM:** William B. Walker, M.D.   
Health Officer

**SUBJECT:** Mandatory Influenza Vaccination or Masking of Staff Members During Influenza Season

In your role as a residential care facility and mine as Health Officer, we share a common goal: provide outstanding care for our residents here in Contra Costa.

As Health Officer for Contra Costa County, **I am now issuing a Health Officer order mandating that all residential care facilities for the elderly require their staff to receive an annual influenza vaccination or, if they decline, to wear a mask during the influenza season while in direct contact with residents or while working in resident areas.**

Annual vaccination is the most important step in preventing influenza. Vaccinating staff not only protects your workforce during flu season but prevents influenza from being introduced into your facility, protecting the residents you serve and avoiding disruption to your facility's day-to-day activities.

Influenza is a serious, contagious disease spread by coughing, sneezing, and talking. People can unknowingly spread influenza to others before they feel ill. Influenza infection affects 5-15% of the U.S. population each year and the elderly are at greater risk of severe flu disease. Each year, 90% of influenza-related deaths and more than 60% of influenza-related hospitalizations occur in the elderly.

### Order

**I, as the Health Officer of Contra Costa County, am requiring that each and every residential care facility for the elderly in Contra Costa County implement a program**



**requiring its staff members to receive an annual influenza vaccination or, if they decline, to wear a mask for the duration of the influenza season while in direct contact with residents or while working in resident areas.**

#### Duration of Order

This order is ongoing and applies to each influenza season unless the order is rescinded. The influenza season is defined as November 1 to March 31 of the following year. In any given year, if influenza surveillance data demonstrate an unusually late peak and continued widespread influenza activity in the spring, I may extend the period during which the masking program shall apply for that year.

#### Facilities Subject to the Order

This order applies to residential care facilities for the elderly (also known as assisted living facilities, board and care homes, or retirement homes) in Contra Costa County.

#### Definition of Staff Member

For the purposes of this order, a staff member is a person, unpaid or paid, who has direct contact with residents or who works in resident areas of a residential care facility for the elderly.

I appreciate your help and support in protecting the residents of Contra Costa County. For any additional questions, please contact our Communicable Disease Programs, Public Health Division, Contra Costa Health Services at (925) 313-6740.