MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 27, 2020

TO: Hospitals, Ambulatory and Community Clinics, Skilled Nursing and Other Long-Term Care Facilities, and other Licensed Health Care Facilities

FROM: Chris Farnitano, M.D., Health Officer

SUBJECT: End of Influenza Season for Influenza Vaccination/Masking Order April 1, 2020

I appreciate your help and support in protecting the residents of Contra Costa County. As defined by the influenza vaccination/masking order (https://cchealth.org/flu/pdf/Memo-Flu-Vaccination-or-Masking-order-for-Licensed-Health-Care-Facilities.pdf), the influenza season was scheduled to end on April 30th but will now officially end at 12:01am on April 1, 2020 and will resume at 12:01am on November 1, 2020.

CDC, California and local surveillance data indicate that there has been a rapid decline in the number of positive influenza tests and the percent positive influenza tests as surveillance laboratories, and there also has been a sharp decline in local influenza outbreaks in congregate living facilities, consistent with a resolving influenza season. Due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, the widespread shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE), and the desire to prioritize PPE for the protection of staff and patients from Covid-19, I am declaring the end of the influenza season at 12:01am April 1, 2020 and lifting the requirement for masking on non-vaccinated health care workers for routine care. Influenza vaccination is still strongly recommended for any remaining health care workers who have not yet been vaccinated during the 2019-2020 season, if supplies are available.

California surveillance data indicate that the predominant strains during the 2019-2020 influenza season were ones matched by the seasonal vaccine. Regional data show a rapid increase in influenza disease activity earlier than in past influenza seasons. Routinely vaccinating your patients and staff as soon as influenza vaccine is available can help protect them when disease activity peaks early in the season.

Influenza disease can spread quickly through a long-term care facility (LTCF), causing severe illness among residents and significant disruption to facility operations. Some LTCF patients with influenza illness may require hospitalization. As recommended in the January 2017 All Facilities Letter (https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CHCQ/LCP/Pages/AFL-17-02.aspx), LTCFs should develop plans to implement droplet precautions if necessary for returning patients hospitalized with influenza who are now clinically ready for discharge.
To help mitigate outbreaks, both the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) recommend the prompt initiation of antiviral chemoprophylaxis as soon as an influenza outbreak is confirmed in a LTCF. Skilled nursing facilities and other LTCFs with standing orders for antiviral chemoprophylaxis for eligible patients are able to quickly respond and prevent more illness and disruption. This recommendation, along with others, is included in an influenza outbreak checklist for facilities (www.cchealth.org/flu). LTCFs can contact our office to discuss standing orders for antivirals.

For additional questions, please contact our Communicable Disease Programs, Public Health Division, Contra Costa Health Services at (925) 313-6740.

Cc: Board of Supervisors, David Twa