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MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 30, 2024

TO: Hospitals, Ambulatory and Community Clinics, Skilled Nursing and Other
Licensed Care Facilities

FROM: Ori Tzvieli, M.D., Health Officer

SUBJECT: Influenza Vaccination of Health Care Workers for the 2024-2025 Influenza Season

The upcoming influenza (“flu”) season may present additional challenges, with many experts concerned about a “double surge” of both flu and SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) viruses simultaneously. Therefore, as we approach this flu season, it continues to be important to vaccinate our healthcare workers against the flu to:

- Reduce the risk of spread of influenza to patients and co-workers; and
- Minimize staffing impacts due to ill workers staying home from work; and
- Reduce diagnostic confusion. As flu symptoms and COVID-19 symptoms are very similar, influenza vaccination will reduce the need for symptom-based COVID-19 testing and potential work exclusion of symptomatic staff.

In your role as a healthcare provider and mine as a Health Officer, we share common goals: reduce the spread of serious diseases such as influenza and COVID-19, provide outstanding health care, and protect our healthcare workers (HCWs). By increasing rates of HCW influenza vaccination and reducing HCW-to-patient transmission of influenza and vice versa, we can protect both patients and HCWs from influenza disease, hospitalization, and death.

HCWs are at risk for influenza and can transmit the virus to their patients and coworkers. Patients in our healthcare facilities are particularly vulnerable to influenza. Young children, the pregnant, the elderly, and those with chronic health conditions are at greater risk for influenza-related hospitalization and death. Furthermore, it is possible to become infected with flu and COVID-19 at the same time, which may increase the risk for severe illness.

As of September 26, 2024, the following Health Order has been **rescinded**: [2012 Mandatory Influenza Vaccination or Masking of Healthcare Workers](#).


The following Health Order is currently in effect: Mandating the Masking of Personnel in Healthcare Facilities During the Annual Respiratory Season, which mandates HCWs in healthcare facilities, regardless of flu vaccination status, as defined in [Health Order HO-2024-2](#), to wear face masks during influenza season. For the purposes of this letter, HCWs are persons, paid and unpaid, working in health care settings who have direct patient contact or who work in patient care areas. Influenza season is defined as **November 1st through March 31st** of the following year.

My strong recommendations regarding influenza vaccination this season:

- All employees should be offered influenza vaccine.
 - Employers shall maintain compliance with the Aerosol Transmissible Disease standard §5199, all vaccinations recommended by the CDPH are to be made available to all healthcare workers with occupational exposure, and utilize a written declination for employees who decline to be vaccinated.
- Employer mandates requiring all HCWs to be vaccinated against influenza are strongly recommended. True medical exemptions to the current influenza vaccine are rare. Exemptions should only be granted to those employees who are able to provide an accepted medical exemption document signed by an MD or DO physician.
- Providing on-site vaccination opportunities can be very effective in increasing employee vaccination rates and is strongly encouraged.
- Inform staff that getting a flu vaccine remains an important tool for the prevention of potentially severe respiratory illness. It helps keep flu illness out of our facilities and maintains staffing levels so we have more room, staff, and equipment to treat COVID and/or non-COVID patients.
- All employees are also strongly recommended to receive the updated COVID-19 vaccine.

Key points of information about this year's influenza vaccine options:

- The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and ACIP (Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices) preferentially recommend a high-dose or adjuvanted influenza vaccine for those 65 years old and older. Please offer and encourage these vaccines to this population of employees, but if they are not available, per ACIP recommendations, any standard dose, age-appropriate influenza vaccine should be administered to avoid missed opportunities to vaccinate.
- The live, attenuated virus intranasal vaccine is approved as an option for use in healthy, non-pregnant persons, 2 years through 49 years old.

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- Seasonal influenza vaccine can be co-administered with other vaccines, including COVID-19 vaccine.

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