




MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 6, 2018

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: Mandatory Influenza Vaccination or Masking of Health Care Workers During Influenza Season – Updated for 2018

As Health Officer for Contra Costa County, **I am now issuing a Health Officer order mandating that all licensed health care facilities in Contra Costa County require their health care workers (HCWs) to receive an annual influenza vaccination or, if they decline, to wear a mask during the influenza season, defined in this order as November 1st through April 30th of the following year.**

Please note that this order supersedes the previous order from 2012 by extending the order's definition of influenza season through **April 30th** of the following year. Other local health jurisdictions with health officer orders, including Alameda County, City of Berkeley, San Joaquin County and other Bay Area counties, also define influenza season as November 1 through April 30th.

Influenza infection affects 5-15% of the US population every year, leading to an estimated 3.1 million days of hospitalization and 31.4 million outpatient visits. HCWs are both at risk for influenza and can transmit the virus to their patients and coworkers. Patients in our health care 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.

In your role as a health care provider and mine as Health Officer, we share common goals: reduce spread of serious diseases such as influenza, provide outstanding health care, and protect our HCWs. State law requires general acute care hospitals and certain employers offer influenza vaccinations to employees. If employees decline vaccination, they are only required to sign a declination statement in lieu of vaccination. While compliance rates with these laws are high, actual HCW vaccination rates are not and may be below the level that will reduce the spread of infection in our health care facilities. Mandatory vaccination or masking policies have been shown to increase HCW vaccination rates to above 95%.



Our goals are to protect both patients and HCWs from influenza disease, hospitalization and death by increasing rates of influenza vaccination of HCWs and reducing HCW-to-patient transmission of influenza and vice versa.

Order

I, as the Health Officer of Contra Costa County, am requiring that each and every health care facility in Contra Costa County implement a program requiring its health care workers to receive an annual influenza vaccination or, if they decline, to wear a mask for the duration of the influenza season while working in patient care areas in that health care facility.

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 1st through April 30th 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 hospitals, ambulatory and community clinics, skilled nursing and other long term care facilities, and any other health care facility.

Definition of HCWs

For the purposes of this order, “health care workers” or “HCWs” are persons, paid and unpaid, working in health care settings who have direct patient contact or who work in patient care areas.

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

cc: Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors
David Twa, Contra Costa County Administrator